

La Bella y la Bestia

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La Bella y la Bestia

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

In exchange for her father's place, a young headstrong woman becomes a prisoner of a beast and is trapped within his mansion... but in time, they slowly become drawn to one another and she finds that there is more to him than what meets the eye.

Notes

Hey, folks. So, I've had this idea in mind for a while and finally decided to write it down: a beauty and the beast AU. Why, you may ask? Because a. Hugh Jackman was in the original Australian Broadway cast as Gaston, and b. It really works well with the characters. Lionel and Beast both start out only caring for themselves (though the former is less aggressive than the latter) and Adelina and Belle both yearn for adventure, something far more grand than the life they currently live. If that doesn't scream a perfect fit, then I don't know what does. Also, as for the crossover thing: since there aren't a lot of supporting characters for Missing Link, I've had to make due with other laika characters for the servants and some cameos from other stopmotion films for the villagers, while I'm using an OC as Adelina's father. Oh, and the songs are kept in too along with a few additions from the Broadway show. With that out of the way, let the fairytale begin!

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Once upon a time, within a far off place in England, there lived a handsome investigator of mythical creatures in a magnificent mansion. Coming from a well-off background and having traveled around the world many times, he had everything his heart desired – things a person could only dream of having. He had several assistants and valets, including his loyal partner Susan whom he had met on one of his explorations in the Pacific Northwest, many maps to various hidden, extravagant lands and many more artifacts, trinkets and other pieces gathered from his travels... and yet, despite being surrounded by these riches, the man was prideful and selfish, not caring about anyone else but himself.

But then, on a bitter winter's evening after the stroke of one, there was a knock on the two mansion doors. The man went to go open the doors and see for himself who this unexpected visitor was, finding a lone elderly beggar standing at the doorstep. His nose wrinkled up in disgust at the sight of her. Her faded brown hair was tangled and filthy, her skin was crinkled and chapped, one of her eyes was shut while the other was wide open and her cloak was ragged and torn.

"Pardon me, good sir," she croaked. "I do not come here asking for much, just a bit of hospitality... I apologize for disturbing you, but it is terribly cold out here." She pulled out a rose, which seemed to shine a little. "If you would be so kind as to let me in, then I will pay you with this rose in exchange for shelter."

"A rose?" He glanced at the rose for a moment, before looking back at her. Repulsed by her ugly appearance, he waved her off dismissively. "I have no use for a flower, now begone from my sight."

"Please, sir, do not be fooled by a mere appearance," she warned him. "Beauty is not found by simply looking at someone, it is found *within*. It lies within the heart."

"What could you possibly know about true beauty?" he scoffed, then motioned for her to leave once more. "I've said this before, and I will *not* say it again: leave now, or I will be forced to escort you off this land myself."

Upon being dismissed again, the beggar's ugliness melted away to reveal a young girl of eleven years with long hair, pale blue eyes and a long dress. Her entire body was surrounded by a golden glow, making her look as though she were a ghost. This was a sight that he had read of and heard in tales when he was a small lad, but never thought he'd see: a witch, a woman with supernatural powers. His face grew more pale than it already was at this. He fell to his knees, bringing his hands together as the young witch drew closer with her glow.

"Forgive me, young miss," he pleaded for her forgiveness. "I did not know that--"

“It’s too late, Sir Frost!” she interrupted him. “You have been deceived by your own cold heart, and as punishment: a curse upon your house and all within it! Until you have found one to love you as you are, you shall forever remain... a beast.”

A loud cry of pain tore out of his throat as he felt his body transform. His suit nearly ripped from how larger he grew, black fur pouring out of the small tears in his clothes.

The other residents within the mansion were transformed soon after, losing their humanity as they were swiftly turned into nothing but walking, talking creatures. The once glorious mansion lost its shine, turning into a dark and desolate place.

Ashamed of his grotesque form, the man hid himself away in his mansion, with only a magic mirror that the witch had gifted to him as his only window to the outside world. The rose she had offered was truly an enchanted rose, working as an hourglass of sorts. If he could learn to love another and earn her love in return by the time the last petal fell, then the spell would be broken... if not, he would be doomed to remain a monstrous beast for all time.

As days bled into months and months became years, the creature who had once searched the world for fantastical beasts fell into a great despair and lost all hope, for who could ever learn to love a beast?

—

The sun rose up into the sky, shining down and casting its rays of light upon the world below it. Roosters crowed loudly, signaling that it was time to get up and start the new day.

The front door of a cozy little house opened, revealing a young woman in a fancy purple dress by the name of Adelina. She was a pure beauty blessed with chestnut brown skin, jade green eyes, intelligence and more. Holding a small basket with a book and map in it, she breathed in the fresh morning air and began her walk into town, ready to begin her morning routine.

A couple of years ago, she and her father – Félix – had moved from their home in Puebla, Mexico to a small town in England for a fresh new start, to help with the inventor’s career. She thought coming to this small town would be a new adventure for her, but instead she found that the town was only diverse in appearance and that in reality, everyone here went by the same routine each and every day. The merchants and businessmen sold their goods, men and women traded gossip, children played around the streets when there wasn’t any school—there was nothing new or exciting as everyone just simply did the same thing over and over again.

It didn’t help that most of the townsfolk found her odd either, because while they did consider her pretty, they found her odd for her taste in maps, books and adventure. In their eyes, adventure was mostly men and women didn’t bother with it as they were meant to be either wives, mothers, seamstresses, cooks, teachers, opera singers— everything but a headstrong, thrill-seeking adventurer who loved maps and books about escapades.

But that was who Adelina *was*. Ever since she was a little girl, she wanted to be a part of something much greater than the provincial life planned for her. She dreamed of adventure,

of exploring far-off places and creating new maps, of journeying through the world and making new discoveries— of being just like the heroes from the stories she'd read as a child. At her very heart, at her *core*, she was an adventurer through and through.

The only one who seemed to understand her was her father, who had indulged in her fantasies when she was a small girl, buying her maps and allowing her to have her own fun little 'journeys' in their old hometown... then again, the townspeople also thought he was rather odd for his inventions. Perhaps it was this reason that he out of all the people in town understood how she felt, so she didn't let the townspeople's words get to her. Instead, she held onto the hope that one day, her father's inventions would get them somewhere, somewhere far from this town. Maybe then, her adventure would begin at long last.

But until that day came, she would have to make due with the small adventures she had within the country and accommodate to the daily routine she was restricted to, so she kept her head up and crossed the bridge, into the provincial village.

Little town, it's a quiet village

Every day, like the one before

Little town, full of little people,

Waking up to say...

As if on cue, the villagers all opened their windows, stepped out of their homes and exchanged their morning greetings.

Bonjour!

Good morn'!

Ohayō!

Good morning!

G'day!

Adelina weaved between the villagers, her eyes focused on a Japanese man pushing a cart with trays of desserts and sweets such as mochi, taiyaki, daifuku and castella.

There goes the baker with his tray like always,

The same old food goes out to sell

Every morning, just the same,

Since the morning that we came

To this poor provincial town...

“Ohayō gozaimasu, Adelina,” the baker, Hashi, greeted her in his native tongue, giving the traditional bow of the head. He wasn’t someone to shy away from as he was a kind fellow, though sometimes he seemed more interested in the stories she could tell rather than her actual day.

Adelina jumped over to the bakery. “Buenos días, Hashi,” she returned the greeting, bowing her head.

“Where are you off to?” he asked her.

“Professor Watanabe's,” she replied, holding up the items from her basket. Remembering the book she had read made her go off on an eager rambling about it, “I just finished the most wonderful story, about a man who explores the world within a single day and—”

“Sounds very nice,” Hashi interrupted her suddenly. “How about you continue your little story later, by the fountain? I know the kids will love it, and I do too but right now, I’ve got a couple of orders to take.” He looked over his shoulders and bellowed to his wife, “Minae, the melonpans! Hurry up!”

Adelina rolled her eyes and would have continued her stroll, had it not been for a voice piping up, saying, “Sounds like a nice story.”

She looked around and saw the local blacksmith standing nearby, leaning on some wood. “Oh, hola, Hanzo.”

“Konnichiwa to you too, Adelina,” Hanzo returned the greeting. He then scratched his head, trying to remember something. He went digging through his robe’s pockets, searching for whatever item might have slipped from his hold.

“Have you lost something again?” she asked, noticing how he dug through his clothes.

“I think so,” he replied, sounding unsure. “I don’t know what though... there’s these flashes in my head and for a second, it feels like I used to have something much greater in my life, but...” He shook his head. “I can’t remember *what* exactly.” He gave a hopeful smile. “But I’m sure I’ll remember one day. Anyway, have a good day.”

“You too.” Adelina smiled, then went on with her stroll towards Watanabe's place.

She passed by two aristocratic women dressed in all black, who looked at her with disdain and wasted no time in voicing their contempt for her odd behavior.

Look there she goes,

That girl is strange, no question

Dazed and distracted, can't you tell?

The wife of the town’s mayor, Cynthia, watched as the young woman walked on by, also noting her oddity.

Never part of any crowd

At his post, Deputy Wayne could also see the odd woman from afar and made his own comment on her.

'Cause her head's up on some cloud

Some villagers just watched her and scratched their heads in puzzlement at how different she was.

No denying she's a funny girl,

That Adelina!

Adelina hitched a ride on the back of a moving wagon, being driven by a tall albino man in a tuxedo.

Seeing a girl in pink with blonde hair pass by, he greeted her.

Bonjour!

The girl returned the greeting.

Good day!

The driver then went on to ask:

How is your family?

Adelina looked over and saw a young pianist talk to a woman in faded red dress, who looked oddly similar to him.

Bonjour!

Good day!

How is your wife?

As if on cue, the young man's wife came in, giving her husband a deathly stare.

Nearby the pianist were two local retired burlesque actresses, Ms. Spink and Ms. Forcible, who were trying to buy something from the market, but were arguing over prices.

We need six eggs!

But they're so expensive!

Adelina looked around, thankful to see that she was at her destination. She quickly hopped off the back of the cart, to Watanabe's little store.

There must be more than this provincial life

She entered the store, met by the warm smile of its owner, Professor Watanabe. “Ah, Adelina,” he said with a bow of his head, having just straightened a couple of books near the window.

“Buenos días,” she replied, giving him courtesy. “I’ve come to return the book I’ve borrowed, as well as the map.” She brought the book and map out of her basket, handing them over to him.

“Finished with them already?” he asked, surprised as he took them. “My, you waste no time in reading.” He put them back on a shelf nearby. “So, where did you run off to this week?”

“A small town in Wales,” Adelina answered. “It was such a fun little adventure... I didn’t want to come back.” Her irises lit up for a moment, before she asked, “Do you have any maps that might take me to a new place?”

“Gomen nasai, but I’m afraid not,” Professor Watanabe replied with a shake of his head. “But you may reuse any of the old ones, if you’d like.”

Adelina nodded and went to scanning the shelves, finding a blue book with a map serving as a bookmark in its middle. She recognized it as she had read it a while ago, deciding to pick it up again. Why anyone would want to give it up would forever boggle her mind. “I’ll borrow these, then,” she decided.

Professor Watanabe adjusted the black square frames of his glasses. “That map and book? But you’ve gone through those *twice!*”

“Oh, they’re my favorites!” Adelina gushed. “A young Mexican boy from a small village joins a girl from the future, the spirit on an old Conquistador, an alebrije and a sorceress’ daughter in traveling around the world to defeat an evil deity, while discovering many legendary creatures in the process- and a map listing all of those fantastical destinations! Oh, what I’d give to live in that world...”

He pressed the book back into her hands. “If you like them that much, then they’re yours.”

She was startled by this. “But señor, you can’t – I can’t just—”

“I *insist*.”

“Well, gracias,” she thanked him as she exited the shop. “*Muchas gracias!*” Eyes focused on the map and book, she walked down the path towards a fountain, passing by mayor Lord Portley-Rind and his colleagues.

Look, there she goes,

That girl is so peculiar

I wonder if she's feeling well

A few more men and women watched as she walked by, deflecting the water rushing down from an above pipe with her hand.

With a dreamy, far-off look,

And her nose stuck in that map and book!

What a puzzle to the rest of us is Adelina!

Adelina sat down at the edge of a fountain and began to read the book, the basket and map still balanced in the crook of her arm. She went on to her favorite part of the book, where Leo San Juan and his companions went to fight a fire-breathing monster attacking a town within America: the Jersey Devil.

Oh, isn't this amazing?

This is my favorite part because, you'll see...

Here's where they defeat the Leeds Devil,

Then they move onto to the Mart in Germany, in chapter three!

She placed the book on her lap, then took the map and looking through the various locations listed on it – Russia, Italy, Japan, China, Greece, Scandinavia – to see where exactly her next adventure would be. After thinking long and hard about the kinds of myths found in each country, she finally decided to mark down Russia, for the tale of the vodnik fascinated her. Once her father and her were out of this town, her adventure would begin in Russia.

Adelina looked up at the sun and realized just how long she had been out. Her father was probably back at home, waiting for her help with his latest invention. Gathering her book, map and basket, she stood up and started to head back home.

In the window of a building nearby, an aristocratic woman in lavender with wacky red hair saw her go on by and smiled slightly, having seen her at the fountain.

Now, it's no wonder that her name means nobility

Her personality shines so very well

An inventor in a green shirt and his dog caught her gaze, and the former added in his own two scents.

But behind that fair facade,

I'm afraid she's rather odd

A few of their neighbors pitched in as well, just as she came on by.

Very different from the rest of us,

*She's nothing like the rest of us,
Yes, different from the rest of us is Adelina!*

In the far side of town stood a fine estate, and inside was a group of men gathered by a red chair near a window.

In the chair sat a man aged sixty-eight who was looking out the window, watching the townspeople go about doing their daily business. He was not just your average man, though—he was Lord Piggot-Dunceby, the leader of the society of great men as well as a very highly respected figure within town. He could care less for a good chunk of the folks though, for being the leader of his own society put him high above the rest.

Piggot-Dunceby snapped his fingers. “Mr. Collick, bring me my tea!” he called for his servant.

“Yes, m'lord, coming right away!” his manservant called back, quickly bringing him a saucer with a cup of tea. “Black tea, just the way you like it, sir.”

Piggot-Dunceby took the saucer, lifting the cup to his lips to take a sip of tea. As he drank, his eyes wandered off to the faint form of a young woman with a map in her hand. His lips curled into a grin as he then stood up. “I believe now is the good time for a morning stroll,” he announced. “Mr. Collick, fetch me my musket.”

“Yes, my lord!” Mr. Collick nodded, going to fetch the musket.

Once he had his musket, Lord Piggot-Dunceby left his estate, setting out into town with Mr. Collick trailing behind him. He ignored the gasps from the townsfolk as he was more focused on tracking down something, or rather *someone*.

He only stopped when he heard some honking, looking up to see a flock of geese flying overhead. He took his musket, aimed it and shot at one of the geese, hitting his target. “Bulls-eye!”

Mr. Collick ran out and tried to catch the prize, only for it to fall into the hands of a short bounty hunter, Willard Stenk, who was an acquaintance of Dunceby's.

“Not bad,” the short man commented, holding up the goose's corpse to look it over. “You really are the head of the society of great men.”

“I know,” replied Lord Piggot-Dunceby, soaking in the praise which boosted his ego.

“No beast out there can stand a chance against you,” Stenk went on, to which Mr. Collick nodded. “And no woman either, for that matter.”

“You couldn't be more correct about that, Stenk,” Piggot-Dunceby said with a smirk, then pointed to a certain young woman. “And would you look over there? My future maid.”

Normally, he thought most women to be useless little lambs whose only purpose was to obey men, but Adelina... she was such a strange specimen, with how she preferred to do things outside of what was intended for her— particularly her interest in exploring. Her venturesome spirit would've steered him away, had it not been for the fact that she was very into maps... maps that led to places with creatures that had yet to be discovered. Her knowledge of traveling was his main key— his ticket to becoming *the* greatest man within the village, more greater than the mayor himself.

Stenk and Collick's gazes followed, and they both gaped at the lord's odd choice. "Th- the inventor's *daughter*?" Collick sputtered.

"Adelina is the only woman in this village with keen expertise in maps," Piggot-Dunceby went on. "That is what makes her the perfect pawn in my plan— see, if I have her as a maid, she would *have* to take me to all those places in her beloved map under my command. The discovery of those supposed creatures from her little stories will put me in such a high position in the eyes of the townspeople, even higher than Lord Portley-Rind!"

"But wouldn't it be *her* discovery?" Stenk pointed out.

"Besides, she's so eccentric and audacious," Mr. Collick added. "And you're of high class..."

"It wouldn't be her discovery, because no one in their right mind would believe a lowly maiden," Lord Piggot-Dunceby said as he looked at Stenk. "Much less a *brown* one." He looked to Mr. Collick. "And while she may be beneath me, I will not pass the opportunity to achieve an even higher status. Don't I deserve a higher status, gentlemen?"

"W-well, of- of course," Mr. Collick stammered.

"I mean, you do," Stenk agreed hesitantly. "But—"

But Piggot-Dunceby interrupted them both, his eyes set on his next target for a moment, before shifting down to his reflection in a small puddle of water.

Right from the moment when I met her, saw her,

I said she's perfect for my plan

Here in town, there's only she

Who has the key to boost me,

So I'm making plans to control Adelina

He was about to go over to her when he saw that she was already leaving town, so he followed after her. As he walked by, three ditzzy women – dressed in green, pink and yellow respectively – watched him, swooning over him.

Look, there he goes,

Isn't he dreamy?

Monsieur Dunceby,

Oh, he's so cute!

Be still my heart,

I'm hardly breathing

He's such a tall, dark, strong and handsome brute!

Unfortunately for Piggot-Dunceby, he made his move at the very moment where everyone would be out on the streets as the market's business boomed at that particular hour.

Adelina easily walked through the crowd by dodging some people, while Dunceby had trouble making his way through as people kept barging in front of him.

Bonjour!

Pardon!

Good day!

Mais oui!

You call this bacon?

What lovely grapes!

Some cheese!

Ten yards!

One pound

Excuse me!

I'll get the knife!

Please let me through!

This bread!

Those fish!

It's stale!

They smell!

Madame's mistaken!

Adelina's yearning for adventure burned deep within her chest as she looked around town, seeing just how dull life was here. Oh, how she wished she had wings like a bird so she could just fly away, far from this boring life.

There must be more than this provincial life!

Seeing that the villagers had made a clear path, Piggot-Dunceby puffed his chest out proudly, loudly declaring...

Just watch, I'm going to make that girl mine!

But then, the townsfolk gathered around Dunceby, surrounding him as they sang about the most peculiar girl to set foot in their town.

Look, there she goes,

The girl is strange but special

A most peculiar madame!

It's a pity and a sin,

That she doesn't quite fit in

'Cause she really is a funny girl,

A beauty but a funny girl,

She really is a funny girl,

That Adelina!

Feeling like everyone's eyes were on her, Adelina turned around, only for the townsfolk to go back to doing their business. She shrugged and continued for home, but was cut off as someone snatched her book and map away from her.

Chapter End Notes

And that's it for this first chapter! Took me two days to write since it was hard getting the song to work, but I managed in the end. It's pretty long though and I didn't have a lot of time to look over for any spelling or grammatical errors, so I apologize if there's any. If I see any, I'll try fixing them when I get the chance later. Anyway, hope you guys liked it so far, and don't hesitate in leaving a comment to let me know what your thoughts are! Feedback is always appreciated.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Alright, so here's chapter 2. Hope you guys like it.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Adelina turned around to see who exactly had taken her book and map, only to see that it was none other than Lord Piggot-Dunceby.

“Hello, Adelina,” the older man greeted her.

“Good day, Dunceby,” she returned the greeting, although there was a hint of annoyance in her tone as she kept focus on the map and book. “Could you please give me back my book and map?” She reached her hand out to grab them, but he moved them away from her reach and flipped through some pages.

“How on earth can you read through this rubbish?” he asked, glancing between the map and the page he’d landed on. “Half of it is mostly words, and the images that are there are such bizarre and grotesque drawings- scribblings straight from a delusional maniac.”

“Maybe to *you*, it's rubbish,” Adelina spoke, trying to hold back the urge to shout at him. She had disliked the man ever since she’d met him with how arrogant, snobbish, ignorant and borish he was. He was so rude, that she could not for the life of her understand how he even managed to become the head of a society for great man when he was anything but great. “But *I* think it’s quite imaginative.”

“Adeline, I believe it’s time you stop this unhealthy obsession over maps and books and begin to pay attention to something worthwhile,” Piggot-Dunceby stated, crumbling the map up and tossing it along with the book into a puddle of mud. “Such as finding a job more befitting of a woman like yourself.”

Adelina shot a glare at him, before going over to pick her things. She tried not to pay too much mind to what he was saying since he couldn’t even be bothered to say her name correctly, though anger boiled within her at the words *unhealthy obsession* and *more befitting of a woman like yourself*. What did the old mamón know about what was good for her?

“The whole town's talking about your behavior,” Piggot-Dunceby kept going on. “How it just isn’t write for a woman to be so invested in adventure... soon, she’ll start trying to assert herself in all the wrong places, and—”

“Might I say, Dunceby, that you are completely backwards,” Adelina cut him off, just as she had picked up both her map and book, cleaning the mud off of both items.

“Is that so?” Lord Piggot-Dunceby’s eyes narrowed slightly, before he went on with another approach: “Say, would you be interested in a new job? I could arrange something for you and have it so that the townspeople no longer speak behind your back, all for just one little favor...”

“No gracias,” Adelina refused, trying to sound polite even though she knew *exactly* what Dunceby had planned. She wasn’t some naive, foolish girl— she knew what he wanted and wouldn’t give it to him, no matter how much he’d bribe from her.

“What is wrong with that girl?” Mr. Collick whispered to Stenk. “Has she gone mad?”

“I’m afraid I must be leaving now,” Adelina announced, turning around and heading for her home. “I have to go help my father with his inventions. Adiós.”

“HAH!” Stenk laughed loudly. “That old lunatic? I think he needs more than help with his inventions!”

Lord Piggot-Dunceby and Mr. Collick both laughed at this remark, while Adelina was fuming. “¡OYE! Don’t you *ever* speak of my papá in such a manner!” she shouted at the three. “How would you like it if I called your mother a *loca vieja moza*, huh? You wouldn’t, so if I were you, I’d keep my mouth *shut*.”

In an attempt to look better in her eyes, Dunceby smacked both Stenk and Collick upside their heads. “You heard the girl! Don’t talk about her father that way!”

“My papá is *not* a lunatic,” Adelina said firmly, hands on her hips. “He’s more of a genius than any of you three could ever hope to be.”

At that second, an explosion rocked the streets. She whirled around, seeing smoke rise up from the roof of her house. Hearing the three men laugh behind her, she shot them one final glare before putting her things in her basket and running back home.

She reached home very quickly. The doors to the cellar were already open, leaving it very easy for her to enter and see all of the commotion. There was smoke everywhere for a second, filling her lungs and making her cough and choke. She tried waving it away with her handle while calling out “Papá?”

She heard a familiar cough, before the smoke cleared to reveal a grey-haired mustached man of eighty years, geared up in an inventor’s clothes with a simple straw hat on his head. There was a barrel around his waste, along his pants.

“How on earth—” he started, before getting cut off by another cough. “¡Maldita sea!” he cursed, pulling the barrel off.

“¿Estás bien, Papá?” Adelina asked her father, looking over to see if he was hurt.

“Sí, estoy bien,” Félix replied, eyes darting over to his latest invention, a sugar cane juicer. “No thanks to that piece of *mierda*!” He promptly kicked the machine. “I’m ready to give up on this *¡maldita máquina estúpida!*”

“You say that every time you make a small mistake,” Adelina said with a small smile, knowing her father’s habits all too well.

“I’m serious this time!” her father barked. “I’ll never get that damned hunk of junk to work!”

“Yes, you will,” Adelina stated firmly. “You’ve made many fine machines before, and I have no doubts you can get this one to work in time for the fair. I bet that once it’s finished, you’ll win first place at the fair.”

Félix crossed his arms, frowning. “Hmmp!”

“And become the greatest inventor of all time,” Adelina added.

He eyed her. “Do you really believe that?”

“Claro, que siempre tengo,” she replied affectionately. “Why else would I have stuck around all these years, other than to cheer you on as you show the world your finest creations?”

A smile made its way across the old man’s face. “Well, there’s no time to waste then- this thing isn’t going to fix itself, after all!” He slid back over to the machine. “Now, let me see... where did I put that wrench?”

“Right here, Papá,” Adelina said, holding out the tool to him helpfully.

He took it from her and used it to work on the invention, turning, twisting and tinkering with it. “So, hija, how was it in town today?”

“It was fine,” she lied a little, not wanting to tell him about her encounter with Duncceby and his lackeys. “I got a new map and book.”

“You sure love those maps and books.”

“Well, they take me to these extravagant lands where there’s adventure, mysterious creatures and even a bit of romance... and happy endings, for the most part.” There was a pause as Adelina thought about what Duncceby had said, about how odd she was. She usually didn’t care so much about what the townspeople had to say, but her encounter with Duncceby, Stenk and Collick left her thinking... “Papá, I’m to ask you something, and I want you to answer honestly.”

“Haven’t I always?”

She sighed. “Do you... do you think I’m too... odd? Like, unladylike?”

Félix looked away from his inventions to her daughter, flabbergasted. “Mi pequeña niña, odd? *Unladylike*?” he repeated. “From whom did you get an idea like that?”

“Duncceby,” Adelina answered, shifting her feet. “And... almost everyone, really. People talk so much about me, how I’m into something that’s a men’s job and...” She bit her lip, shrugging. “I just don’t think I fit in here. There’s not a lot of people I can talk to, and the ones I can talk to are usually busy most of the time.”

“They talk about me too, but you don’t see me taking it to the heart,” Félix told her. “The only reason they speak of you like that is because they’re jealous of all the class you have, and how they’ll never be as unique as you are.”

Adelina smiled, though she was a bit teary-eyed. “You mean it?”

“Por supuesto,” her father insisted with a nod of his head. “And even if you weren’t so deep in adventure, why, I’d be on your side regardless.” Both father and daughter smiled at each other, then he said, “Now, what do you say we give her a try?”

“Alright.”

“Go fetch the sugar cane,” Félix instructed. His daughter did exactly just that, bringing back the grasses and tossing them into the machine. “Alright, now stand back...” Once she stood back, he pulled the lever. “Here we go.”

The invention slowly chugged to life, taking in the sugar cane and shredding it until it was nothing but sweet juice.

“It works!” Adelina exclaimed joyfully as she saw liquid come out of a small tube.

“It does?” Félix sounded almost surprised, checking to make sure. When he saw the liquid come out, his surprise gave away to joy. “It does!”

“I knew you could do it, Papá!” Adelina hugged her father tightly. “You’re going to win that contest, I just know you will!” Whatever concerns she had before about the townspeople and Duncceby’s view on her no longer mattered, for soon, she’d be far away from the village.

Her father was now as enthusiastic as she was. “Hitch up Felipe, mija! I’m off to the fair!”

—

Later that day, the two loaded the invention onto the wagon, before Félix sat at the front of the wagon, holding in Felipe’s reigns.

Then, the family’s black dog came up to them, barking.

“Hey there, Chief! How are you doing, boy?” Adelina cooed, bending down to pet the dog’s head. Noticing how formidable he looked, she turned back to her father and suggested, “Perhaps you should take Chief with you— that way, if anything bad happens, he could find the way back home and bring me to you.”

Félix looked at the black dog. “I don’t know if that will be necessary, but if you think it’s for the best, then alright,” he said, looking back at his daughter.

Chief hopped onto the cart, and the wagon began to move forward.

“Adiós, Papá! Good luck!” Adelina called out to her father, waving at him.

“Adiós, hija!” Félix returned, waving back at her as he rode off into the distance. “Take care of yourself in the meantime!”

Chapter End Notes

Pretty short, I know but hey, there wasn't a lot to work with in this one.
See y'all in the next chapter, bye~

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

As the group continued on into the forest, the sun had set and nightfall came. Félix kept checking his map frequently, trying to see if they were getting anywhere closer to the fair, but it seemed that the deeper they went into woods, the harder it became for him to navigate the way to his destination.

“We should’ve been there *hours* ago,” he muttered. “Must’ve missed a turn. Should’ve taken a—” he stopped as he noticed something ahead. He took a lantern and lifted it up, shining light on a crossroad up ahead. “Felipe, Chief, *mira!*” There were two paths, with the right one being a dark, overgrown path while the left was a more inviting route. “¡Venga, Felipe! The right one is the shortcut.”

The horse obeyed, albeit hesitantly. Chief, on the other hand, knew better. He began barking as they went down the path on the right, pointing his nose in the left direction.

“Chief, *¡cállate!*” Félix hissed. “It’s a *shortcut*. We’ll be there soon.”

The dog’s blue eyes narrowed. He tried grabbing the man’s pants with his teeth, attempting to steer him on the right path as they continued into the dark.

“Stop that!” Félix nearly shouted, pulling away from the dog. He looked ahead, noticing that they were nowhere near the fair and were surrounded by fog. “Maldita sea, Felipe,” he cursed the horse’s name. “This can’t be right... where have you even taken us?”

Chief resisted the urge to roll his blue orbs at how clueless his owner could be, instead barking and pointing his head back.

“Maybe you’re right,” Félix murmured, looking back. “We should turn around, and—”

He was cut off by a silhouette racing by one tree to the next. “What on earth?”

Chief began to growl at something in the distance, near a log and bushes. “Something the matter, boy?” Félix asked, noticing the dog’s sudden change in behavior. The oceanic sport hound kept snarling, baring his teeth. Then, there was a loud howl, followed by two more. Félix looked ahead and squinted his eyes, seeing multiple yellow orbs glowing through the dark fog and mist.

“Felipe, go!” he cried out, urging the horse to run. “¡Ándale, *ándale!*”

As soon as the horse did, a pack of wolves ran out from the shadows, growling and barking. Félix steered the wagon left and right, while Chief barked fiercely at the wolves on their tail.

The creatures kept up their pace, massing to overrun them. Félix tried to keep steering the wagon, only for Felipe to get startled as a wolf tried to leap onto the cart, bucking both his

owner and Chief off in the process before running away in fright.

This left Félix and Chief stumbling down a hill, towards two iron gates. Félix grabbed the gates and tried shaking them open. “Is someone there?” He dared looking over his shoulder, seeing the wolves advance while Chief still kept barking at them. “Help!”

The gate suddenly opened, leaving him to stumble in. Once Chief was on the other side with him, he slammed it shut, in the faces of the wolves. The wolves tried sticking their heads through the gates, only to flinch as Chief nearly bit one of their muzzles. The leader of the pack let out a growl, before the pack accepted that they wouldn’t be feasting tonight, and so they disappeared into the forest.

Félix watched as they left, before turning to look behind him. There, a large mansion came into view, followed by a flash of lightning. It was looked so miserable and grey, like it had lost its light a long time ago. Rain poured all around, adding to the gloomy atmosphere.

It looked abandoned, yet there could be someone there. Perhaps, the owner would be kind enough to let him stay for the night.

He walked up the front steps, lifting up his hand to knock on the door. With a light tap, the two doors open with a creak. “How strange,” he murmured as he stepped inside the castle, followed by his dog, who was sniffing around cautiously. He placed his hat on a coat rack, not noticing that it was actually three boxes stacked, each reading “Fish”, “Shoe” and “Jelly.” Arms came out of two of the boxes, grabbing at the hat while the third waved at the old man's form.

Taking a good look around, he could see so many statues and sculptures of cryptids. Next to a table stood two "sculptures", one of a yeti and another of a mitla. As he passed them, the yeti turned, watching him from near the entrance.

“He looks lost,” a male voice piped up. “Must’ve been stumbling through the woods...”

“Shut up,” a young girl’s voice snapped. “It’s not our issue. If we don’t say anything, maybe he and his dog will leave.”

Hearing the whispers, Félix looked around to try locating the voice. “Is someone there?” he called out.

“Don’t even *think* about it, Susan,” the young girl hissed. “Not one word outta you, not a single word.”

“I apologize if I’m intruding, but I’ve lost my way through the woods,” the old man went onto explain. “And I need a place to stay for the night.”

“Poor fellow,” Susan sympathized. He looked to the other cryptid. “Come on, Coraline, have a heart.”

“Shhhhhh!” Coraline tried to shush him, clamping her paw over his mouth.

However, their attempts at going unnoticed failed as Chief sniffed around, stopping as he ended up at their feet. Coraline yelped and tried shooing the dog away, allowing Susan to say, “You are always welcome here, sir!”

“I heard that!” Félix exclaimed, grabbing a candle and whipping it around. “But *who* said that? Step out where I can see you!”

Susan stepped out. “Over here!”

“Where?” Félix looked around, still lost. Chief barked and tried to get him to turn around, only for his master to continue looking everywhere except behind him.

Susan tapped the man’s shoulder, making him turn around to face him. “Hi,” the yeti greeted him, grinning and waving his hand.

“AH!” Startled, Félix jumped back, falling to the ground. “In- *incredible*...”

“Now you’ve done it, Susan,” Coraline groaned as she came over, shaking her head. “Great, just great...” She began trying to push the man towards the door. “Good day to you, sir, and goodbye!”

Félix shook his head quickly, trying to process what he was seeing. “Wait, wait, wait! You’re a mitla, and- and you’re *talking*!”

“Surprising, ain’t it?” Coraline asked sarcastically, continuing to push him toward the door. “Quite the puzzle, now bye-bye.”

“Coraline, why are you being so rude to our guest?” Susan asked, stepping between them. “Have a *heart*.”

“I have a heart,” Coraline barked. “But we need to get him out before *he* finds out!”

“How can this be?” Félix asked, wondering just how this cryptid could talk. Curious, he grabbed the mitla’s tail and began playing around with it.

“Hey, let me go right now!” Coraline cried as she felt him twist her tail. “Stop it!”

Félix ignored her, continuing to fiddle around with her. He lifted up one of her paws, tickling it underneath, making her giggle. He was about to remove her dragonfly hairclip, when she swatted at his hand with her paw.

“Hands off!” she snapped, getting back on the floor and glaring at him.

“P-perdóname,” Félix stammered. “It’s just that I’ve never come across any cryptids before, especially not one that ta—” He was unable to finish his sentence, as he sneezed in her face.

Coraline winced, wiping the snot off her face. “Bless you.”

Susan noticed how Félix sniffled, indicating the cold he had caught from being out in the cold woods. “Poor man, soaked to the bone,” he sympathized, beginning to lead him towards the

den. "If you sit by the fire, you'll be warm in no time."

"Gracias," Félix thanked the yeti, following him to the den. It was already lit and warm with a fire flickering in the hearth. There was an armchair, a fur rug and even a blanket awaiting him.

"No, no, no!" Coraline protested, running after them in an attempt to stop them from entering the den. "Do you know what *he'll* do if *he* finds him here?! He'll be screaming *bloody murder!*" She tumbled down the stairs, too late. By the time she looked up, she saw the old man taking a seat in the large chair in front of the roaring fire. "Oh no, not in *his* chair!"

Then came a cooncat with blue eyes, casually padding by her into the den, causing Chief to bark at it in suspicion.

"This can't be happening," Coraline muttered, covering her eyes. "I've gotta be dreaming. Yeah, that's it." She began smacking herself. "Wake up, Coraline! Wake up now!"

"Why, hello there," Félix greeted the cooncat, patting its back. It rubbed against his hand, purring.

A young boxtroll whose box read 'Eggs' came in, eyes gleaming with amazement. "Can it be? Is it a man?" he asked excitedly. He eagerly bowed his head at the man. "It's a pleasure to meet you, sir! It's been so long since we've had a visitor."

"Oh! Well, the pleasure's mine," Félix returned with a smile. "What a pleasant household this is..."

"Alright, that's it!" Coraline yelled as she got up on her feet. "No more! I'm in charge here and what I say go—"

She was interrupted by a tray of soup and bowls barreling past her, pushed by a kitsune who was followed by her son. "Here, drink this whale soup," Sariatu offered, pouring the murky liquid into a bowl. "It smells, yes, but it will warm you up."

Félix nodded eagerly. "Sí, por favor."

"No, you're not supposed to give him soup!" Coraline protested, throwing her arms up in dismay. "He'll be here all night!"

Sariatu passed the bowl to her son, Kubo, who had an eyepatch and appeared to be around the same age as Coraline and Eggs. Kubo passed the cup over to Félix, who gladly took it.

"Hello there, niño," he said to the small kitsune. "What's your name?"

"Kubo."

"Hmm, it does have a nice ring to it."

"Care for a blanket, sir?" Eggs asked, throwing the blanket over his shoulder. He then turned to Susan. "You don't suppose he's got a daughter, do you?"

Susan shrugged. "I dunno. Maybe, maybe not..."

"Susan, listen to me!" Coraline exclaimed, grabbing the yeti's attention. "We've got to get him out of here! Do you have any idea what *he's* doing to do when he finds this old man here, in—"

"Calm down, Coraline," Susan soothed her, patting her shoulders. "He will never know."

Suddenly, the doors slammed open and a strong gust of wind blew into the room, extinguishing the flames in the fireplace.

"On second thought, nevermind," Susan said with a nervous laugh. "It was only a matter of time."

Kubo hid behind Sariatu, while Eggs retracted himself into his box. The cooncat yowled and ran off, leaving Chief to stick by his master's side. Coraline pulled the rug over her body, trying to hide herself underneath it. Susan just stood there anxiously, biting his nails.

Félix looked behind him, twitching violently as he saw a monstrous figure standing in the doorway. It was so dark, that the only thing he could make out from the creature were his glowing blue eyes.

The beast entered the den, standing on his two hind legs as he looked around the darkness, mainly in the direction of the others. "It appears that a stranger stands among us," he said in a low voice, almost like a growl.

"Please, let me explain," Susan began, his voice tentative. "He was lost in the woods, and he was falling ill so—"

"You let a stranger in," the beast interrupted him, his gaze hardening and his voice growing more harsh.

Coraline poked her head out from underneath the rug. "Sir, let me just say... I tried to stop them!" she broke in, trying to claim her innocence. "It was their idea to let the man in, meanwhile I was trying to stop them, telling them it was a bad idea but did they listen? *No!* They went and—" The beast growled and shot a glare at her, shutting her up quickly.

The beast stalked toward the chair. Félix frantically looked around the room, to one side of the chair and then to the other. A turn of the head brought him face-to-face with the monster, treating him to a close view of a pair of human eyes on an otherwise animalistic face.

"Dios mio," the old man gasped, eyes wide with fear. He scrambled out of the chair, trying to get away from the monster.

"Who are you?" the beast asked, following easily due to his height. "Why have you trespassed on my property?"

"I – I was lost in the woods, and, and I needed shelter," Félix stammered, frightened, backing away from the beast.

“You are not welcome here,” the beast growled, looming over him.

“I- I’m sorry...”

The beast caught onto the way the old man stared at him. The look of terror on his face, a sign that the intruder had seen him in his hideous state... it brought in a mixture of both shame and fury.

“Hideous, isn’t it?” he asked harshly, hot fury boiling within him at the widening of the man’s eyes.

“Oh no, I wasn’t...”

“Come to stare at the beast, haven’t you?” the beast snarled, blocking the entrance just as the man turned to leave.

“Please, I come with no ill will!” Félix pleaded. “I was merely looking for a place to stay!”

“Is that so?” the beast asked, eyes narrowing. “Then I shall *gladly* give you a place to stay.” He grabbed the man and dragged him out of the room despite his pleas, leaving the others standing in the darkness.

Chief let out a low growl and was ready to chase after the monster, when Susan grabbed him, stopping him.

“No, don’t,” Susan said, making the dog look at him in confusion. “Attacking him will only make things worse. You need to go home, *now*.”

Chief glanced at where the beast had dragged his owner off, then back at Susan. Realizing that the sasquatch had a point, he nodded his head and ran out of the castle, into the forest and towards the village, where he knew he could find help.

Chapter End Notes

So we meet the castle staff at long last, huzzah! Now you all see why I had to use other laika characters and make it a slight crossover, because there's none other that fit the roles better than these guys. As for why Susan's a yeti, it will be explained later on and as for Lionel's monstrous form, it will be revealed within the next chapter. ;)

Anyway, hope you did enjoy this and if you want to hit me up on social media, then check out my new tumblr *liolinaorbust*! Doesn't have the most high quality content, I know, but hey, it's better than nothing amirite?

Anyhow, toodles~

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The sun was fresh on the horizon, and Adelina was already up. Now dressed in a red suit with greyish-purple tights, high heels and lavender gloves, she went out to town as usual with her basket in hand.

First, she paid a visit to the baker, fetching some bread. Afterwards, she went to the fountain in the town square, sitting down to read her book and map. As she read, a young boy and girl began approaching her.

“Ex- excuse me, miss,” the boy, Norman, spoke up.

Adelina looked up to see the two children curiously looking at both her book and map. “Oh, why hello there, children. Is there something you want to ask?”

The girl, the mayor’s daughter Winnie, nodded. “Yes, we were wondering, just what kind of book and map have you been reading?”

“Ah, you mean this book?” Adelina asked, turning it over. She flipped it open, allowing the children to see the pages. “This book is called *Las Leyendas* and is about a gifted Mexican boy and his band of misfit friends who go around the world and discover legendary creatures, all while trying to foil an evil overlord who tries to eradicate mankind.” She then gestured to the map. “And the map has all of the places they go to written down on it, far off lands such as Eastern Europe, China, Mexico and more.”

“Wow!” the two gasped, staring at the book, then up at her.

“Would you like to read a couple of pages?” Adelina offered, waving for them to join her. They both nodded and sat by each side of her, trying to get a good look at the pages and the map. The children’s awe was so precious, that she couldn’t help but smile. So the town wasn’t a complete lost cause after all, for there were at least some young children – especially young girls, like Winnie – who held an interest in adventure and maps. She didn’t usually read things out loud in public, but when there were children around, it was a much different case.

She encouraged them to read, holding the book open and flipping the pages as one of them read aloud while the other took a look at the map. “And so, the ship steered to the Japanese village,” Winnie read aloud, failing to contain a squeal. “Oh, how exciting! I bet they’ll slay a beast here!”

Adelina chuckled at the girl’s enthusiasm. “Well, you’ll have to continue reading in order to find out.”

“Miss Adelina?” Norman asked, making her turn to him. He was holding up her map, pointing to the place circled. “Are... are you going to Russia? Because there’s a large circle around it.”

“Yes, Norman,” Adelina said, nodding. “When my father gets back from the fair, I’ll be going to Russia to start my own adventure.”

Winnie gasped, her eyes glimmering with excitement. “You mean, just like Leo in the book?” She clapped her hands, jumping up and squealing again. “Amazing! If you ever come back, you’ll show us pictures and tell us about it, right?”

Adelina smiled at this. “Of course.”

“What in the devil’s name are you doing?”

They all looked ahead to see Headmaster Hopkins storming over, a look of outrage on his face. “Filling the children’s heads, especially little miss Winifred, with insane fantasies?” he demanded, seething. “Are you so lonely that you have to spread your delusions around like the plague?”

Winnie tried to step in and defend the woman: “Headmaster Hopkins, we—”

“Go home, niña,” Adelina ordered softly, giving her a curt shake of the head. The children getting involved would only worsen the situation and dig them and herself even deeper into trouble, which was the last thing any of them needed.

This time, Norman tried to break in. “But Adelina—”

“Go to home to your mothers, *now*,” ordered the woman once more, now a bit more firm.

The two seemed hesitant at first, but were cowed enough to scurry back home regardless. By the time they had gone off, the headmaster was seething with so much rage, that some folks were watching the confrontation.

“It’s bad enough that this village has women like you prancing about with your maps and your fantasies of adventure,” Headmaster Hopkins ranted angrily. “We don’t need anyone else following in your footsteps, especially not the mayor’s daughter!”

“But we have to do *something*,” Adelina argued. “Not everyone will live by the provincial lifestyle. Some prefer adventure.”

Headmaster Hopkins glared daggers at her. “Adventure is for men of higher, greater status,” he said sternly. “Not for silly girls who refuse to abide by society’s rules, indulging in some delusion.”

“It’s not a delusion,” Adelina protested, trying to keep calm despite feeling her temper rising. Fully lashing out would only make things look worse and add fuel to the fire. She had to keep level-headed. “I’ve been reading maps and books of grand escapades, studying the mythology of each country, learning what they have to offer. There’s so much more to the world and the children have a right to hear—”

“The children do *not* need to listen to your nonsense,” Hopkins cut in. “Miss Portley-Rind is a noble lady and Mister Babcock is studying to become an active, working class member of the common society- a librarian, I hope. Lord knows we cannot rely on Professor Watanabe nowadays, what, with his recent indulgence,” he uttered the last words with disdain. “All the children need to know is their place.”

Adelina was beginning to grow frustrated with the headmaster and how close-minded he was. She had only let a young girl and boy read a book and map, allowing them to at least get a *sense* of some adventure – something *different* from the same boring old life this town lived by – and yet, she was being treated like a criminal on trial. Why couldn’t Headmaster Hopkins, or the whole town for that matter, accept difference? Why couldn’t they accept that she was different and that her love for adventure wasn’t something to fear? Why couldn’t they try to see her as anything other than the odd girl?

She tried to protest again, only for Hopkins to continue: “I think it’s time you learn your place, young miss. You may think you’re this great adventurer who has a map to every hidden corner of the world, but really, you are an ordinary farm girl. You are the daughter of an inventor, not some hero you find in those fairytales you read.” He gestured at her book with disdain, then yanked at her map. “You can borrow all the maps you want, but they will bring you *nowhere*.” She pulled her map back, while he went on, “No matter how much you dream, no matter how much you try to be special, you will always be the inventor’s daughter, a lowly girl living on a farm. Either you accept your place within society and gather some dignity, or stop trying to infect the folks who actually have it with your indecency and leave this society be.”

Adelina tried to say something, but the words got stuck on her tongue, so she gave up and simply nodded her head. There was no use in trying to argue with Headmaster Hopkins, for he would never try to see from her perspective, nor would anyone else in the village for that matter. They all saw her as the oddity, the outcast, the black sheep – the girl who disrupted their natural peace and order. What was the point in trying to convince them otherwise?

Once the painful lecture was over and Headmaster Hopkins left, she stood up and began to head home, feeling disheartened.

Among one of the folks who witnessed the lecture was Professor Watanabe, who tried to approach her. “I’m sorry for what happened with the headmaster,” he said, voice filled with pity. “He’s so old-fashioned, so don’t pay any mind to him. If you want, I could–”

“It’s fine,” Adelina interrupted, though her voice sounded thoroughly dispirited.

Professor Watanabe frowned, but didn’t say anything else and merely let her walk on.

It was then that a certain bounty hunter slipped away down a street, having also seen the confrontation.

“And so, gentlemen,” Duncceby was speaking to the members of the optimates club, “that is why even if she is unworthy of such a position, it’ll still be worth–”

“Scuse me for interrupting,” cut in Stenk, approaching the lord.

Dunceby and his men turned to the bounty hunter. “What is it, Stenk?” the lord asked impatiently.

“A certain *maiden* has fled the nest,” Stenk said with a smirk.

“Ah.” Dunceby grinned at this, turning to his men. “Gentlemen, I believe it is time.”

Just as Adelina had entered her little home, most villagers began setting up for a party complete with tables, chairs, a small banquet and a band of musicians. Everyone was there—even the mayor himself, Lord Portley-Rind, came with his wife and daughter, who weren’t nearly as thrilled about the party as he was... then again, the lord always enjoyed balls thrown by his fellow rich snobs, especially when the banquets consisted of his favorite food: cheese. That, and he was never really the brightest light in the chandelier either, hence why he even agreed to officiating the contract.

“Ooh, Adelina’s going to get the surprise of her life,” Mr. Collick chuckled.

“Indeed, this is an offer she won’t refuse for certain,” Dunceby agreed. He then looked to all the guests gathered, clearing his throat. “I would like to thank you all for coming to my little ball. First, I must go in there and bring out the newest member of the household,” he joked.

The crowd – especially the men of his great society – roared with hearty laughter, while the three ditzy women were seething with jealousy by the banquet. He then turned his attention to his right-hand man. “Now, Mr. Collick, when Adelina and I come out of that door—”

“I strike up the band?” Mr. Collick asked, bringing out a baton. He went on to direct the band as they began playing a tune fit for the setting.

Dunceby’s eyes narrowed and he raised his hand above his assistant’s head, immediately making the shorter man stop. “Not yet,” he grunted.

“Oh, right, my apologies, sir,” Mr. Collick muttered, flinching back in fear of being struck.

In the living room, Adelina was sitting in a chair, going through her map and book again. In an attempt to take her mind off the confrontation from earlier, she looked through the places on her map and imagined herself there, exploring every inch and corner of those far-off lands. She imagined she was far away, free from the life she led in the village.

She wondered why her father hadn’t returned from the fair yet. It had been a day since he had left... he couldn’t have gotten lost, for he had Chief with him to track down the way back home. Perhaps, he had gotten sidetracked- yes, that was it. He was just taking his time. Nothing to worry about, so she carried on with what she was doing.

That is, until she heard a knock on the door. She put her things away and went to the door, peeking through the window to see who it was. She let out a groan, seeing that it was none

other than Lord Piggot-Dunceby. Well, it was best to get it over with, and so she opened the door.

“Lord Piggot-Dunceby, what a... *placentera sorpresa*,” she said, forcing a courteous smile.

He had an unsettling grin on his face. “Aren’t I always full of surprises?” He stepped into the house, looking around, then back at her. “I heard that you ran into some trouble with Headmaster Hopkins. Nevermind him, he’s another old codger who thinks he owns everything. However, the villagers will always be wary of the change you drag along with you.”

Adelina’s lips curled into a frown, irritated at the blame being placed upon her shoulders. “All I was doing was letting two children examine a map and book,” she protested. “I wasn’t committing a crime, I was simply allowing two children to have fun.”

“The only children you ought to worry about are your own.”

“But I’m not ready to have children yet. I don’t even know if I’ll ever be ready for marriage.”

“Not to worry, I think I may have a solution to your issue with the villagers,” Dunceby said, smiling pointedly at her. “And it involves neither of those options.”

Adelina felt uneasy at this, not liking where this was headed. “What do you mean by that?”

“You know, there isn’t a girl in town who wouldn’t *kill* to be in your shoes. This is the day—” he stopped, looking into a mirror nearby. He licked his teeth clean, then looked back at the woman. “This is the day your dreams come true.”

She raised an eyebrow. “What makes you think you could possibly make my dreams come true, Dunceby?”

“You and I are not completely different,” he tried to reason. “We both have needs, wants...” He tried bringing an arm around her shoulder, making her shudder in disgust. “Picture this: a mountainous mansion, a fine roast cooking on the stove, a wall of pictures of great men who have traveled far and wide and conquered many places, and my little, loyal maid running the place while I discuss business with my men.” She looked positively disgusted by this, but he continued, “And of course, dozens of villagers will flock in each day to see the greatest sensation, a man higher than Lord Portley-Rind himself.”

“Imagine that,” Adelina muttered, trying to move away.

But Dunceby kept going: “And do you who the little maid will be?”

“Hmm, let me think...”

“You, Adelina!”

She stared at him, eyes wide as she backed away from him. “Dunceby, I – I must say, I’m speechless... I have no idea how to answer such a question...”

“Simple,” he said, gesturing out towards the door. “Outside, the entire village is gathered outside. The mayor is there, ready with the contract. Once you sign it, you shall be my maid—the one who will provide the map to all the places I’ve yet to conquer, the one who will make the discoveries that the town will know as the great Lord Piggot-Dunceby’s.”

“So what you’re saying is that you want me to be your *slave*?” she asked, backing away in disgust. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. This old goat wanted to make her his servant, just so he could use her for his own personal gain. He was using her love of maps as a leverage to take away the little freedom she had, and the worst part was that he was *excited* about it. “Dunceby, I would *never* be your servant even if working for you was a last resort!”

He had a frightening look on his face, before sighing. “Adelina, do you know what happens to young women after their fathers pass on?” he asked her. “Without a husband or a steady job, they end up begging for small scraps of food...” He pointed towards the path leading to the cottage, where a homeless spinster girl was shaking an empty bag, asking for money. “Like poor little Aggie.”

Adelina looked at the girl, a pitying look on her face as she watched her thank Hanzo for giving her a few coins. She felt bad for her. No one knew exactly where she had come from or who she had been before, but what was known was that her name was Agatha, though they preferred to call her Aggie. It was rumored that she had been exiled from her old hometown after being accused of a crime she didn’t commit, forced to wander the streets.

It must have been horrible to have no home, no family— nothing but a ratty old cloak that hung over her head, shielding her face from others.

“Such is the world we live in,” Dunceby continued, as if he’d proven a point. “For a woman such as yourself, there aren’t many choices.” He walked on towards her as she kept moving away, backing up to the front door. “So, what’ll it be?”

Adelina had other plans, though. “I’m very sorry, but...” She fumbled for the doorknob, confidence surging as she found it. “But I *refuse* to work for a snob like you!” She twisted the knob, allowing the door to swing open, ducking as he fell out into the mud.

Mr. Collick struck up the band and they played a nice tune, making a couple of folks dance. Adelina slammed the door shut, listening in until the coast was clear. The band kept on playing, until Dunceby’s head popped up from the mud. Mr. Collick cut off the band, watching as the lord wiped his face clean.

Stenk stepped close, leaning his head down in amusement. “So, I take that it went well,” he said cheekily.

Dunceby stood up, grabbing the bounty hunter by the collar. “I’ll have Adelina for my maid,” he growled. “Make no mistake of that!” He threw him into the mud, then stormed off.

“Touchy,” Mr. Collick murmured, then went after his master.

With Dunceby gone, the little celebration was called off and everyone left. Once everyone was gone, Adelina cracked the door open, checking to see if the coast was clear. She let out a

sigh of relief, seeing that there was no one around.

“Can you imagine?” she scoffed, taking the food for the other dogs she had to feed in the farm. “He asked me to be his *maid!*”

Rex, King, Boss and Duke all barked and growled in outrage upon hearing her rant.

“*Me*, the maid of that ignorante, arrogante, egoísta!” she ranted angrily, pouring the dog food into each of their bowls. Then, she decided to vent out her frustration further through song.

Madame Adi,

Can't you just see it?

Madame Adi, his little slave

She grunted in disgust, kicking Duke's bowl in frustration, making him and the other three yelp and scurry back in fright.

No sir,

Not me, I guarantee it!

I want much more than this provincial life!

Adelina placed down a bag of dog food on the post, then raced out into the open field. She gazed ahead at the beautiful valley, at the setting sun and took in all of her surroundings, relishing in them.

I want adventure in the great wide somewhere,

I want it more than I can tell...

She came down on her knees, sitting in the grass. She plucked a dandelion, quietly making a wish: to be free from this dull life.

And for once, it might be grand,

To have someone understand

I want so much more than they've got planned...

She blew into the dandelion, watching its puffs float around into the distance. She allowed herself to relax for a moment, until she heard a familiar bark. She turned and saw Chief running to her, looking terrified as ever. What was more disturbing though was the fact that her father was nowhere to be seen.

“Chief! What are you doing here?” Adelina caught the frightened hound in her arms, trying to calm him down by stroking his fur. “¿*Donde esta Papá?* Where is he, boy? What happened?”

She saw the distressed look in his eyes and noticed how frantic his barking grew. Something was wrong. “We have to find him,” she said quickly. “Take me to him, Chief!”

After going back into the house and grabbing her white wool coat, she and Chief set off into the forest.

—

After hours of wandering through the dark woods, Chief led Adelina to the gates of a mansion. The sky seemed to grow even darker as she arrived.

She looked ahead at the dark, gloomy building. “Is this the right place, Chief?” she asked the dog.

He barked in confirmation. She went over to the gates, cautiously opening them. “Don't worry, Papá,” she whispered. “*Ya voy.*”

—

In a spare room of the mansion, Coraline was berating Susan for his foolishness.

“Couldn't keep your mouth shut for one second, could you?” she ranted at him, scolding him despite being twice his junior. “Nope, you just *had* to invite him to stay, just had to let him have some soup, sit in the master's chair and pet the cat!”

The yeti shrugged. “I was trying to be a good host.”

—

Adelina quietly pushed the door open, not wanting to cause too much of a disturbance. “Hello? Is there anyone here?” she called out, hoping someone would answer, yet she received no response. “Papá?” She and Chief ascended the staircase. “Papá, are you here? Please, come out.”

—

In the kitchen, Sariatu was preparing a tub of water.

“Mother!” Kubo cried excitedly, dashing over to the older kitsune. “Mother, I saw a girl in the castle!”

Sariatu turned to her son, shaking her head. “Kubo, now is not the time for stories,” she said firmly.

“But *Mother*,” he whined, “I really did see her.”

“Not another word,” his mother said scoldingly, picking him up by the scruff of his neck. “Into the tub.” She dropped him in, starting to bathe him.

Eggs came in though, confirming the kitsune pup was right: “I saw a woman in the castle! An actual living *woman*!”

Kubo poked his head out of the water, squirting some out. “See, Mother? I was right!”

—

Coraline and Susan were still bickering, or rather, the mitla was ragging him on while the yeti covered his ears, not wanting to argue further.

“You reckless, foolhardy, unwise, foolish—”

“Papá?”

The two stopped, turning to see where the voice had come from. They caught a glimpse of the new arrival walking down the hall.

“Did you see that?” Susan asked Coraline. “I could’ve sworn I saw...” he trailed off, and they both went to peek around the corner. He gasped, seeing that the new arrival was a *woman*. “So it *is* a girl!”

Coraline rolled her eyes. “Of course it’s a girl!”

An idea came into Susan’s head. “That’s it! She’s the one, the lady who can break the spell!” he cried cheerily, rushing after her.

“Susan, wait!” Coraline exclaimed, scurrying after him.

—

Adelina wandered through the hallway. At one point, she sensed that there was something behind her, but when she turned, she saw nothing but an open door. She and Chief stepped through the door, into a cold grey hall lit by torches.

“¿Hola?” she continued to call out. “¿Hay alguien aquí?” Chief sniffed around and began climbing up a rickety staircase, seemingly led by a golden light. “Wait, we’re looking for mi padre!” She followed after him, yet she found not a single person when they came to the top. “Strange,” she murmured, not noticing a certain yeti watching her while standing still as a statue. “I could’ve sworn I heard something... please, if there’s anyone here, speak up now!”

“Adelina, hija?” a voice echoed from one of the doors lined up.

She instantly recognized the voice. “Papá!”

Chief barked and ran over to the door, scratching at it. Adelina grabbed a torch and went over to it, kicking it open to reveal a small room with a single mattress in it.

On that mattress was her father, who immediately took her other hand. “H-how did you know where to find me?”

Adelina felt his quivering hands. “You’re chilled to the bone!” she exclaimed, and he was sent into a coughing fit. “We need to get you out of here.”

“No, Adelina, what you need to do is leave this place immediately,” he told her.

“Who did this to you?” she questioned.

“There’s little time left,” Félix said, looking around. “You need to go, *now!*”

“I’m not going to just leave you here to rot!” she insisted.

“*What are you doing here?*” an angry voice growled as something seized her shoulder, whipping her around. Her torch fell from her hands into a puddle, making the light die out, leaving the room in mostly darkness, save for a single beam of light pouring through the cracks of the ceiling.

“¡*Corre, Adelina!*” her father shrieked from behind her.

Chief growled at the direction from where the voice seemed to be coming from. Adelina stood in front of her father, trying to find the source of the voice. “Who’s there?” she asked, keeping calm. “Who are you?”

“The owner of this mansion,” replied the voice, its shadow shifting. Adelina could see that the shadow belonged to a large, tall hairy creature, which seemed to be carrying a cane with it since she heard something tap against the floor as it moved. The only thing she could fully make out were its two blue eyes, focused on her.

“I’ve come here for my father,” she stated her business. “Please, release him. Haven’t you heard the way he coughs? He’s getting sick!”

“Then he should’ve known better than to come here,” the creature replied coldly.

Adelina glared at him. “How can you be so heartless? It isn’t his fault he wound up here. Where else was he going to find shelter?” she retorted. “Are you really going to let an old man die for a simple mistake?”

The beast stood there, caught back by how quick she was to bite back. No one had ever talked to him that way before. She had quite a temper, and her looks didn’t kill either. Back then, he never really thought of courting any woman, yet now that he was in this state and this woman was here, standing her ground despite being face to face with a monster... it was intriguing, to say the least.

“Let him go,” she ordered. “I will do anything within my power, just let him out.”

“I’m afraid there is nothing you can do for him,” the figure said, turning away from her. Though the coldness in its tone seemed to have faded, that didn’t make it sound less disconcerting. “He trespassed here, so now he must suffer the consequences.” He began to head for the stairs.

“But there has to be something I can do...” Adelina trailed off, thinking of a way to free her father from his captivity. An idea suddenly hit her. It was a calamitous one, yes, but if it guaranteed her father’s freedom, then it was her best bet. “Wait!” she cried out, grabbing his attention. “I’ll take his place.”

The beast froze in his tracks. “You...” Surprise flashed in his blue irises as he looked back at her. “You would... really do that? You would give up your freedom for his?”

“Adelina, no!” her father yelled. “You’re insane!”

She ignored him, focusing on the beast. “If I were to take his place, would you release him?”

“Yes,” he replied, his voice quieter than a whisper. “That is a reasonable bargain. Very well; you take your father’s place and I shall let him go, but you must promise to stay here forever.”

She pondered for a moment, before realizing that if she was going to stay here for the rest of her days, she would at least need to know who she was talking to and see him first. “What is your name?”

“I am Sir Lionel Frost,” he answered. “And your name is Adelina, correct?”

She nodded. “Sir Lionel,” she began, “could you come into the light?”

“I could, but I do not think you will like what you see,” Lionel spoke hesitantly. “Still, since you ask so politely, I shall comply with your request.” There came a cane first, tapping down on the floor, then a large paw with five long claws. It was followed by a thick black-furred leg, clad in plaid blue pants. Another leg followed, along with two arms clad in a matching suit and waistcoat, the paws of both arms covered with grey gloves, fur and claws sticking out through the holes. Last of all came his head, and it was then that Adelina finally recognized the beast before her. His head was that of a wolf’s with a long snout, sharp fangs, pointy ears and of course, those piercing blue eyes- the only human quality about him. The whole body stood straight, towering above her, appearing to be around at least six feet.

Adelina knew exactly what kind of creature he was, for she had read about it in a book long ago. He was a werewolf, a creature that stood on its legs like a human, yet was a beast in nearly every sense of the word.

She looked into his eyes for a moment before stumbling back, nearly frightened. She glanced at her father, seeing how terrified he was.

Félix took his daughter’s hand. “Adelina, no! I will *not* allow you to do this!”

Adelina regained her composure. She stood up and walked over to the Lionel, looking him in the eye. It was either her father’s freedom or hers and in the end, she knew what was more important. “We have a deal, Sir Lionel.”

“Very well then,” the lycanthrope accepted her decision. “You have my word and I have yours.” He moved aside, allowing her a moment with her father.

Adelina's legs gave in and she fell to the ground, her head in her hands. Félix came over to his daughter, hugging her. "Listen, mija, you don't have to do this," he tried reasoning with her. "I'm old, I've lived a long life—"

The old man didn't get to finish as he was seized by Lionel, who started to drag him downstairs.

"Wait!" Adelina cried, watching her father being ripped away from her.

"Adelina!" Félix yelled.

"*Wait!*" Adelina shouted, rushing over to the window, watching Lionel drag her father to a wagon.

—

"Please, have mercy on my daughter, please!" Félix begged.

"She is no longer your concern," Lionel dismissed him. "Take him back to his village," he ordered the wagon, to which it complied.

The carriage scurried as quickly as a mouse with the old man inside it.

Adelina watched from a window in the towers, tears clouding her vision as the carriage soon disappeared. How foolish could she have been to wish for life outside the village? At least there, she had lived with her father, but now? She had no one, no one except for Chief.

She slumped to the ground in sorrow, with Chief in her lap, whining softly.

Chapter End Notes

This has gotta be the longest chapter I've ever written by far, so I really hope y'all liked this.

As for some explanations for certain things:

1. The reason why the whole headmaster confrontation and the spinster thing was kept in was because I wanted to write something leading up to the Belle reprise and Adelina's ultimate frustration with this provincial life. I tried not to make it too out of place and actually fit, by taking out the inventor plot and just making it so that Hopkins saw her odd for the same reason the villagers did, but was more extreme. Duncceby... well, Duncceby's just a jerk, so a bit of manipulation isn't far outta his game, is it? Nah.
2. Lionel being a werewolf was planned since day one, and shoutout to that one commenter for guessing! Though, it was more based on Wolverine than Van Helsing, though I admit the latter was helpful appearance wise while the former was just inspiration.

Anyway, again, I hope ya liked this and hopefully, the next chapter won't be as much of a nightmare to write. Until next time, bye~

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Lionel made his way back up to the highest floor of his mansion. He was still taken aback by the entire situation. Just how did he get himself into this predicament? He was a fine noble gentleman, an investigator of cryptids! At least, he *had* been... he had been a great man with many valets by his side, yet now... now, he was a hideous werewolf hiding away within the deepest parts of the woods.

“Um, excuse me, Lionel,” said a familiar voice.

“What is it?” he asked, perhaps a little too harshly as he turned to Susan, who stood on his right.

“Since that girl is going to be staying here for quite a while, don’t you think she’ll need a room?” Susan suggested, wincing as he braced himself for a growl.

Lionel only scoffed at this and continued on his way up. “Giving her a room,” he grumbled. “What a ridiculous...” he trailed off, stopping to give it a thought. If this woman could be the one to break the spell, then the least he could do was attempt to be hospitable. He was a gentleman once, after all. Besides, when she’d given him her word to stay forever, she certainly didn’t specify it being *this* particular part of the mansion.

Adelina was sniffing and stroking Chief’s fur when she heard the sound of footsteps near her. She turned and saw Lionel standing not too far from her. When her eyes fell on him, she glared daggers at him, her green eyes alight with fury.

“You didn’t even let me say goodbye!” she yelled at him, though her voice cracked as she tried to hold back a sob. “The least you could’ve done was let me say a simple ‘adios’, but no...” She looked away from him, down to the ground. She couldn’t even *look* at him after what he did. “I could barely get out a word to him before you *ripped* him away from me like he was a ragdoll.”

Lionel would have snarled back at her for the way she addressed him, but found himself frowning with guilt. He had taken away her father, perhaps her only family, and her freedom... and he knew exactly how it felt to lose the privilege to wander freely, to have it all taken away so quickly. He put on a neutral face though, not wanting to appear too soft now. “I shall show you to your room.”

Adelina looked back at him with surprise. “My- my room? But, but I thought that after... that—”

“What, you thought I was going to let you stay here in the tower?” Lionel interrupted her. “Of course not, unless of course, you *want* to stay here,” he spoke with a hint of sarcasm.

“No, I’d rather not,” she answered, eyes narrowing at him, keeping her ground.

“Then come—” He reached a paw out to grab her hand, but she recoiled from him. Whether it was in disgust or with fear, he didn’t know. All he knew was that it made him feel shameful. He stopped and huffed. “You... come with me.”

So she did, trailing behind him as he lead her through the dark, dreary mansion. She looked around and observed the gloomy, brooding decor of the place. Her hound kept close by her heels, blue eyes often glaring at some of the statues nearby.

Lionel often glanced back at Adelina, but each time he did, she would look away and pretend her eyes were focused on the sculptures. He looked around, noticing Susan standing near a statue, motioning for him to say something to the woman.

He turned back to Adelina. “I...hope you like it here,” he began. “Since the castle is your home now, you are free to go anywhere you may like, except for one room – the West Wing.”

“Why, what’s in the West—” she’d started to ask, only for a growl to cut her off.

“It is forbidden,” Lionel said sternly.

Adelina flinched. “Understood.”

They were both silent for a while after that as they continued down the hall. When they finally got to her room, he opened the door for her, allowing her and her dog to enter. Adelina and Chief looked around, taking in their surroundings. There was a nice bed made, a large closet on the wall and even a small rug on the ground near the foot of the bed for Chief to sleep on. There was also a large window with the curtains drawn aside, allowing them to see the harsh winter storm outside.

“Now, if there is anything you need, you have my servants to attend to you. As soon as you call for them, they will be there,” Lionel continued. He saw that her back was turned to him, so he went to leave, but not before adding, “I shall see you at dinner within an hour.”

Adelina raised her brow, though kept her back turned to him. “Dinner?” she asked, repeating his words. “You want me to join you for—?”

“You are to join me for dinner,” he stated, though it sounded like a demand with how harsh it came out and how his voice raised. “That is *not* a request.” He then slammed the door shut, leaving her alone within the room.

Adelina stood there in disbelief, until rage boiled over and her fists balled up. She banged on the door with her fists, while Chief scratched at it with his claws, barking furiously. “I will never dine with you, *¡maldito lobo!*” she screamed. “*¡No en mil años! ¡Cállate!*”

She could no longer hold back the dark despair that threatened to overwhelm her. In an attempt to calm herself down, she began to sing.

Yes, I made the choice,

For Papá, I will stay

But I don't deserve to lose my freedom in this way

You... monster!

She kept glaring at the door, imagining the werewolf was still behind it.

If you think that what you've done was right, well then

You're a fool!

Think again.

Adelina looked around at the strange, unfamiliar surroundings. It was so dimly lit, like a prison cell... it was so different from the little house she lived in, which was always lit so brightly.

Is this home?

Is this where I should learn to be happy?

Never dreamed,

That a home could be dark and cold

She began to look back on her childhood and what her father always told her about home, how he defined it.

I was told every day in my childhood,

Even when we grow old

"Home should be where the heart is"

Never were words so true.

My heart's far, far away

Home is, too

She slowly walked over to the window.

Is this home?

Is this what I must learn to believe in?

Try to find something good in this tragic place?

Just in case, I should stay here forever,

*Held in this empty place
Oh, but that won't be easy
I know the reason why
My heart's far, far away...
Home's a lie.*

Adelina placed her hands on the glass, squinting her eyes as she tried to make out something besides the snow flying everywhere. Alas, she couldn't see even the forest through the harsh snowstorm.

*What I'd give to return
To the life that I knew lately
But I know that I can't
Solve my problems going back*

And to think, she complained of that dull, provincial town...

She removed her hand from the glass and looked up at the ceiling, feeling her head spin and the walls seemingly closing in on her.

*Is this home?
Am I here for a day or forever?
Shut away from the world until who knows when?
Oh, but then,
As my life has been altered once, it can change again!*

She shook her head, snapping out of her thoughts as she imagined facing the beast head on, standing her ground against her captor.

*Build higher walls around me,
Change every lock and key!*

But then even those thoughts faded too, and she was back in her room. Finally, the feeling of defeat settled in as she realized she would never truly be at home ever again.

*Nothing lasts, nothing holds all of me
My heart's far, far away,*

Home and free...

Finally, Adelina let out her sorrows and flung herself onto the bed, burying her face in a pillow and screaming until her lungs no longer had any energy left except to release broken sobs. Chief came over to her side, trying to lick her hand and cheer her up, but she wouldn't stop crying.

A few days ago, she had lived a happy, safe life within her village... but now, she lived an unsure, frightful one within the mansion. At this point, she wasn't even sure if she even wanted to eat, knowing she'd have to face *him* if she ever did join him for tonight's meal. Starving seemed like a better option, at this rate.

Meanwhile, the icy cold frost continued to blow harshly outside her window, as if it were the world's cruel reminder of the life she was now forced to live.

Chapter End Notes

So I decided to include "Home" from the Broadway version because a. why not and b. it really fit the situation, did it not?

Hope you liked this little chapter, and I'll see you all in the next one. Toodaloo~

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Long time no see, huh? Well, I decided to make up for that with a double feature! Enjoy!

Back in town, a lamplighter was hard at work outside as fiddle music played from within the tavern. Inside, amidst the animal heads, antlers and drunken villagers, there was an even sadder sight: Duncceby. He was leaning back in his seat and venting out his frustrations while Mr. Collick and Stenk listened. “Just who does she think she is? That little rat has chosen to mess with the wrong lion. No one would dare to mess with men of a greater society, men who’ve shaped the world!”

“Darn tootin’,” said Stenk, while Collick merely nodded as the old man continued to rant.

“Dismissed, rejected, publicly humiliated!” Duncceby was so enraged that he was red in the face, practically foaming at the mouth by now. “Why, it’s a travesty!”

Collick went in front of him. “Would you like more devil’s mouthwash, my lord?”

Duncceby looked down at him. “What for? Drinking grog won’t change the fact that the little wench has *disgraced* me!”

“Who, you? Why, *never*. My lord, you have to pull yourself together,” Collick said, deciding it was time to cheer up his boss. Thus, he began a new song...

Gosh it disturbs me to see you, my lord

Looking so down in the dumps

Every man here'd love to be you, my lord

Even when taking your lumps

There was a chorus of cheers from the gallery, signifying that there was a truth to Collick’s statement.

There's no man in town as admired as you,

You're everyone's favorite guy

Everyone's awed and inspired by you,

And it's not very hard to see why...

Collick looked over to Stenk who stood still for a moment, until he realized what the neurotic assistant's look meant and nodded quickly. He pulled out a bag with some coins from his pocket and threw it over to a fiddle player in the corner. The fiddler nodded at him and began to play.

No one's slick as Duncceby

No one's quick as Duncceby

No one's neck is as incredibly thick as Duncceby's

For there's no man in town half as manly

Perfect, a pure paragon!

You can ask any Tom, Dick or Stanley

And they'll tell you to whose team they prefer to be on!

Stenk went to a table of three, grabbing them by the arms, making them chime in.

No one's been like Duncceby

A king pin like Duncceby

No one's got a white tuft in his chin like Duncceby

Duncceby smirked at all the praise he was getting and posed proudly.

As a specimen, yes, I'm intimidating!

The villagers raised their mugs and cheer.

My, what a guy, that Duncceby!

Give five hurrahs, give twelve hip-hips!

Stenk came over, holding a mug of beer and swung his arm up as he exclaimed...

Duncceby is the best and the rest is all drips!

...only for the beer to spill onto Duncceby's face. The bounty hunter looked up at the old man and before he could say anything, he was lifted up by his shirt and smacked across the face, which only garnered more amusement from the villagers.

No one fights like Duncceby, douses lights like Duncceby

In a wrestling match, nobody bites like Duncceby

The three silly women sat on a bench, ogling and swooning over the old man.

For there's no one as burly and brawny

He then lifted the bench with the women on it, causing them to squeal in delight.

As you see, I've got some strength to spare

Collick walked over, careful as to not stand under the bench.

Not a bit of him scraggly or scrawny

Dunceby dropped the bench, shooting a grin at his assistant as he gestured to his white locks.

That's right, and every last bit of me is covered with hair!

The villagers danced around, singing more praises about the old man.

No one hits like Dunceby,

Matches wits like Dunceby

"In a spitting match, nobody spits like Dunceby!" Collick chimed in, standing across the room with a bucket in his hand.

"I'm especially good at expectorating!" Dunceby boasted, proceeding to spit across the room. The bit of saliva flew in the air for a brief moment, before landing right in the bucket.

"Ten points for Dunceby!" the villagers cheered.

Dunceby moved around the inn, holding court.

When I was a lad I ate four dozen eggs every morning to help me get large!

Dunceby juggled a number of eggs, then swallowed them whole. Stenk tried to attempt the trick, only to get hit in the face by three eggs.

And now that I'm grown, I eat five dozen eggs

So I'm roughly the size of a barge!

Nearing the final note, he hopped onto a table and held up a rifle. The men in the bar all smirked at this, then chorused:

No one shoots like Dunceby,

Makes those beauts like Dunceby

Dunceby took three shots at a beer barrel, which began leaking into the mugs of onlookers.

"Then goes tromping around wearing boots like Dunceby!" Collick remarked as Dunceby stomped over to his seat.

"I use antlers in all of my decorating!" The old man gestured around to the heads of animals he had killed in the past.

My, what a guy!

Dunceby!

Everyone in the bar let out merry cheers and were about to continue their daily business, when a certain old inventor burst into the tavern.

"Ayuda! *Alguien ayúdeme!*" yelled Félix frantically.

"*Félix?*" asked the tavern keeper, who'd been serving a man a drink just as the elder had barged in, making him spill its contents onto the table.

"Por favor!" Félix cried as he ran around the bar, desperate for help. "I need your help! He's got her – he has her locked up in some old cursed mansion!"

"Who?" asked a villager as he passed by their table.

"*Adelina!*" the inventor answered the villager, then turned back to the rest of the bar members. "We must leave now! We cannot waste anymore time!"

Dunceby got up from his seat, making his way towards the inventor. "Now, now, Félix, let's keep our hair on. Tell me, who is this man who has Adelina locked up in some... haunted mansion, you say?"

"It's not a man who has her locked up," Félix said as he turned to Dunceby, shaking his head. His voice grew more frantic and he gestured his hands wildly as he shouted: "It's a *monster!* A large, horrible, disgusting monster!"

A moment of silence, then most of the villagers began to laugh and mock him, save for Hanzo and Professor Watanabe.

"That's enough now!" the former shouted, trying to silence everyone.

Professor Watanabe walked over to the old man, a slightly skeptical look on his face. "A large beast, you say? What *kind* of beast?" he asked.

"One with fur as black as ebony," Félix began to describe the beast in detail, "a long ugly snout, fangs sharper than knives, ears that could sense more than a bat and piercing blue eyes."

"A werewolf?" asked Hanzo, raising an eyebrow. "I thought those were just myths."

Félix glared at him. "The beast – werewolf, whatever you call that thing – is real! Do you understand?"

"Alright, Félix, no need to get your knickers in a twist," Dunceby said, patting his back. "We'll help you out."

"You will?" A smile crossed the inventor's face. He was so happy he didn't notice Duncceby shoot a look at some cronies and jerk thumb toward the door. "Oh *gracias*, muchas gracias!"

The cronies lifted Félix up by his arms, carrying him off to help him... by throwing him out the door.

"Crazy old Félix," snickered one of the cronies, not noticing the disgusted looks Hanzo and Professor Watanabe were giving him and his comrades. "He's always good for a laugh!"

"Crazy old Félix, hmm?" murmured Duncceby, now pensive. "Crazy old Félix..." after repeating this words, an idea was stirred up within him.

Collick, I'm afraid I've been contemplating...

His assistant gasped.

A dangerous past time-

I know.

But that barmy old fool is Adelina's father,

And his sanity is only so-so.

He pulled the neurotic man closer, continuing his musing.

Now the wheels in my head have been turning,

Since I looked at that loony old man

See, I've said it before that I'd rise to the top,

And right now, I'm evolving a plan!

"If I..." Duncceby started, pulling the younger man's head closer as he began whispering.

"Yes?"

Most of the others such as Stenk tried listening in to get in on the plan as well, while two particular villagers could only watch with unease and low disgust.

"Then I..."

"No, would she?"

"...guess!"

"Now I get it!"

"Let's go!" both cried in unison.

They began a waltz around the floor as they sang.

No one plots like Dunceby, takes cheap shots like Dunceby

Plans to persecute harmless screwballs like Dunceby

The rest of the bar chimed in, save for two villagers in particular who remained silent.

So his rise to the top, we'll soon be celebrating!

My, what a guy

Dunceby!

Meanwhile, outside the tavern, Félix shivered as he began to wander around town. "Will no one help me?" he wondered aloud. Still, he wasn't going to let anything stop him from helping his daughter escape from that monster's clutches. He was going to bring Adelina back home, no matter what the cost would be.

Adelina hadn't been paying much attention to the hours that had passed since her arrival to the castle. After she had sobbed for a while at the edge of the bed, she found herself staring out the window, thinking of all that she had lost.

Then, she heard a knock at his bedroom door. She got up and went over to the door. "Who is it?"

"Sariatu, dear," replied a kind, motherly voice from the other side of the door.

Adelina opened the door, only to look down and see a kitsune and her pup come in. She gasped, backing up as they entered the room.

"I thought you might need some soup," explained Sariatu as she and her son came in with a tray of said snack. "The journey must've been quite a long one."

"But you're... you're a..." Adelina stammered, trailing off until she bumped into a stack of boxes. She turned around, gasping once again as she saw several trolls peek their heads and limbs out from their boxes.

"Oof, careful now!" chuckled one of the boxtrolls. "The name is Herbert by the way, but nowadays, people tend to refer to me as 'Jelly.'" He squinted. "At least, they *would* if we got visitors..."

At this, his fellow boxtrolls, Shoe and Fish, began jabbering in their own language – Trollese, Adelina could only presume they were speaking. Honestly though, she was more worried about all of the weird creatures she encountered by each second rather than the weird language they spoke. It was like she was a magnet to them or something. "This – this is impossible!" she cried, going over to sit on the bed in order to calm herself down.

Herbert – or Jelly; she had no clue what to call him honestly – plopped himself down next to her. “It *should* be impossible, but here we are nonetheless.”

“Told you she was pretty, mother, didn’t I?” Kubo asked smugly.

“Alright now, Kubo, that will do,” said Sariatu, handing a bowl of soup over to him. The pup hopped over to Adelina, who sat down on the floor. “Slowly now,” warned the pup’s mother. “Move too fast and you’ll spill it.”

“Thank you,” Adelina murmured, picking up the bowl of soup and holding it to her lips.

As the woman was about to take a sip of soup, Kubo asked, “Hey, wanna see me do a trick?” The pup puffed his chest out, then did a backflip.

“Chip!” Sariatu cried scoldingly.

Kubo smiled sheepishly. “Oops, sorry...”

Sariatu looked back at the woman. “That was a very brave thing you did back there, taking your father’s place.”

“Yes, we all think so,” Herbert added in. “Why, if I’d been in your shoes, I would’ve... I would’ve...” He scratched his head. “Huh... I don’t really know what I would’ve done.”

“But I’ve lost my papá, my dreams – everything,” Adelina despaired. “How am I supposed to feel brave when I have nothing and no one?”

Everyone looked at her with sympathy for a moment. “Cheer up now,” Sariatu said softly, trying to comfort the woman. “Things may get better for you soon... you’ll see.” The woman gave her a smile, but then the kitsune realized something. “Oh! Listen to me, talking about this and that when dinner is to be prepared! You’d better get ready. Kubo!” She quickly led her son to the door.

“Bye!” the pup yipped as he left with his mother.

Adelina stood up and Jelly, Fish and Shoe approached her. “Well now, what shall we dress her in for dinner?” Jelly asked his friends. Fish uttered something in Trollese to which Shoe nodded and they went over to the wardrobe. “Hmm, let’s see what we’ve got in those drawers,” murmured Jelly, following his friends as they went through various dresses.

Fish let out a triumphant cry as he pulled out a pink dress. “Ah, that’s perfect, Fish!” Jelly cried. “She’ll look spectacular in that one. Right, Shoe?” Shoe nodded at his friend’s remark.

Adelina gave an apologetic smile. “That’s very kind of you, but I’m afraid I won’t be going to dinner tonight. I’d rather stay in here with Chief instead.”

The three boxtrolls all gasped. Shoe and Fish began freaking out, while Jelly said frantically, “But you *must* go to dinner, or else he’ll–”

"Ahem," a voice cut in. The four all turned to the doorway and saw Coraline there. "Dinner awaits, miss."

Lionel paced back and forth in front of the fireplace. "What is taking her so long?" he asked impatiently. "I thought I told her to come down..." his voice then raised, "*Why isn't she here yet?!*"

"Try to be patient, sir," Eggs attempted to soothe the werewolf. "I mean, she *did* lose her father and her freedom all in the same day. I don't think anyone in her shoes would easily forget that, much less in an hour."

"Lionel," Susan started. "Do you think that this woman could be the one to break the spell?"

"Of course I have," Lionel snapped in response. "What do you take me for? A fool?"

"Good!" Susan grinned. "So, you fall in love with her and she falls in love with you and *poof!*" The yeti waved his arms around for emphasis of the transformation. "The spell is broken and we'll be back to our old selves again by midnight!"

"Oh, it's not that simple, Susan," said Sariatu as she entered the room, shaking her head, having heard the yeti's rambling. "Falling in love takes time, not a day."

"But the rose has already started to wilt!" Susan replied, a bit of urgency in his tone. "We don't have much time left!"

"It is no use..." Lionel ran a paw through his neck's fur, where the ends of his hair had once resided. "She is so beautiful, and I am..." he trailed off for a moment. "...have you seen how *hideous* I am?" he hissed, gesturing at himself. He knew fully well he wasn't the type of man women would marvel at, much less one like Adelina.

Sariatu smiled sadly, taking a step forward. "You must help her to see past your appearance and find the beauty within."

"I don't know how," Lionel muttered.

"Well first, you should make yourself a little more presentable," Sariatu instructed. "Stand straight, fix up your clothes and try to act like a proper gentleman!"

Lionel complied, standing straight. He smoothed out his clothes before he faced the three.

"When she comes in, smile," Eggs advised.

"You know, it's been a while since you have smiled," Susan remarked. "Ever since that night, you've barely even grinned... perhaps you could finally smile now?"

At first, Lionel's ears went down as he mentioned *that* night, but they perked up as he attempted to grin, showing off his sharp pearly whites.

"I... think you should save that grin for another time," Susan chuckled nervously as he looked at the sharp teeth. "Don't wanna frighten her now. Instead, you should impress her with your wit!"

"And be gentle!" Eggs added. "Also, tell her that she's really pretty and sweet, like a strawberry. That'll work, I'm sure of it. It usually does in the books."

"But above all..." Sariatu raised a pointed finger as if she were a teacher giving advice to a student on a test of some sort.

"*You must control your temper!*" they yelled in unison at the werewolf.

Then, there was the sound of the door opening. "Here she is!" Susan gasped.

Lionel turned to the door, excited and slightly nervous, until he saw Coraline peeping in instead of Adelina.

"Good evening, everyone," Coraline greeted, sounding anxious.

"Well, where is she?" Lionel asked, getting annoyed now.

"Who?" Coraline asked, before she quickly realized what he meant. "Oh, the lady! Yes, well, she is... um..." she paused, unsure of how to break it to him. "It's funny you mention her 'cause, uh..." She bit her lip, before she finally said, "She's not coming."

"*What?!*" Lionel cried in outrage. He pushed the doors open as he ran up the stairs with the four cryptids trailing after him, trying their best to keep up.

"Hey, calm down!" Coraline exclaimed, trying to reason with him. "It's not *that* big of a deal!"

"She's right!" Eggs agreed. "There's no need to get so hasty!"

But the lycanthrope ignored her and in mere seconds, he was at the woman's door. He banged his fist on the door, yelling, "I thought I specifically told you to come down to dinner!"

"¡*No tengo hombre!*" Adelina shouted back.

Lionel felt a rage burn within him, ready to boil over like a volcano full of lava. "I am the one who owns this mansion, ergo you are *required* to come down to dinner right this second!" he ordered.

"You may own this mansion, but you don't own *me*," Adelina retorted. "So no, I *won't* be coming down to dinner."

"Oh yes, you *will*," he growled. "If not, then I will have to—"

"Um, Lionel?" Susan tried to step in. "I could be wrong, but I'm pretty sure that's *not* the best way to win her favor..."

"Please," Sariatu begged. "At least *try* to act like a gentleman."

"But she is so *stubborn*!" Lionel argued, jerking a thumb at the door.

"That doesn't mean you can't try being gentle with her," Eggs replied.

Coraline nodded at this. "Yes. Girls like it more when guys are gentle and not so... *shouty*."

Lionel thought over their suggestions for a moment, then went on to ask in a dull tone, "Will you join me for dinner?"

"*Para nada*," Adelina denied him yet again.

Lionel let out a grunt and pointed at the door again, as if to say *see what I mean?*

"Be suave," Susan told him. "And gentle! Can't forget being gentle."

"It would be a great pleasure," Lionel began in a sweet tone, gritting his teeth in a grin as he bowed like a noble gentleman, "to have you join me for dinner."

"Say 'please'," Susan added in a whisper.

Lionel glanced at the yeti, then at the door. "...*please*."

"So, Sir Lionel," the woman began, and he could hear footsteps near the door. "You think that by coming up here, banging on my door and then talking so pleasingly, you can just charm me and flatter me into joining you for dinner?"

"...yes?" the lycanthrope responded, uncertainty in his voice.

"*No*!" she yelled. "What is *wrong* with you?! You lock my father up for supposedly trespassing, you make me bargain with you just to free him and don't even let me say a proper goodbye to him, and yet you expect me to *dine with you*? Are you insane?"

The lycanthrope's temper rose, his eyes twitching and a growl rising up in his throat. "You cannot just stay in that room all night!"

"Watch me!" she spat. "I'd rather stay in this room forever and *starve* than dine with someone like *you*!"

Her words struck him in both his pride and heart, leaving him feeling wounded. "Fine," he hissed. "Stay in there then." He turned to his staff. "If she does not dine with me, then she does not dine with anyone."

With that, he thundered off, leaving the four to stand around.

"Oh dear..." Eggs winced. "That did *not* go well at all."

"Gee, ya think?" Coraline retorted, rolling her eyes.

"Susan," Sariatu began, turning to the yeti, "stand watch at the door and keep an eye on her. If she leaves, inform us at once. Understood?"

Susan gave an affirming nod. "Watch the door - got it!"

Sariatu then turned to Eggs and Coraline. "Come on, children," she said with a shake of her head. "Let's go clean up the kitchen."

Lionel stormed into the West Wing, his private quarters that he often sought refuge in. "I ask her nicely yet she refuses," he ranted. "What does she want me to do then? Get on my knees and *beg*?" He grabbed the magic mirror on the table. "Show her to me."

The mirror flashed for a moment, then showed an image of Adelina sitting on the bed with Herbert beside her.

"He really isn't that bad once you get to know him," the boxtroll tried to convince her. "Try giving him a chance."

"I may not know *everything* about him, but I *do* know this: he doesn't deserve a chance!" Adelina's eyes narrowed. "I want *nothing* to do with him!"

At that last statement, Lionel turned away from the mirror. "It's no use, is there?" He hung his head low. "How can she ever see me as anything else other than a monster?"

His heart heavy and his mind a wreck, he looked at the rose the witch had given him. On its stem, its leaves were slowly turning from a cool green to a sickly brown while one of its petals shriveled up and fell to the bottom of the glass that withheld the flower. This made him realize that his time was running out.

It was hopeless, completely and utterly hopeless.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Unfortunately for this chapter, I could not keep the "Be Our Guest" song number due to how tough it was to adapt, however I shall compensate that with dialogue instead. Enjoy.

If there was one thing that Sir Lionel was right about, it was that Adelina couldn't stay in her room all night. That, she admitted, was true. Growing up, it was stressed that she eat every meal each day as skipping a meal would only backfire and lead to starvation, making her too thin. Even though she wasn't a child anymore, she knew it still applied in a way since she *had* to have a meal eventually. She couldn't just go a night without eating, so she slowly opened the door and peeked out, checking to see if anyone was out there. Fortunately for her, Susan was leaning against the wall, sleeping like a little baby. Seeing that he wasn't able to spot her, she left her room with Chief following, closing the door behind her and tried to be as quiet as possible as she went down the halls. She had heard what Lionel had said and knew very well that if she were caught, then she wouldn't be having any dinner that night so she made sure she and Chief didn't make not one sound.

In the kitchen was Coraline and Eggs who were cleaning things up, while Sariatu was ushering her son to bed. "Come on, Kubo," the mother said as she pushed him to his bedroom. "Off to bed with you now."

"But I'm not tired," her son protested.

"Yes, you are," Sariatu insisted, pushing him in.

"No, I'm...not," Kubo yawned, then fell asleep while his mother shut the door.

A banging of pots and pans came from the stove, which was being controlled by a wooly mammoth with a heavy Russian accent, known by the manor dwellers as Bobinsky.

"I work and I slave all day long, and for what?" Bobinsky rambled on, enraged. "A culinary masterpiece gone to waste!"

"Quit it with the grouching, Mr. B," said Eggs with a roll of his eyes. "It's been a long night for *all* of us."

"Besides, I like that girl," Sariatu said with a small smile. "I like her spunk."

"Well if you ask me, she's too stubborn," Coraline huffed. "After all, he did say 'please'."

"I think it's the first time I've ever heard him use that word, though," Eggs pointed out.

“You’re right,” Coraline realized.

“You see!” exclaimed Sariatu as her point was proven. “She’s already starting to have a good influence on him.”

“Yet she still refused his dinner invite and enraged him,” Coraline retorted. “Some good influence.”

“Well if he doesn’t learn to control his temper, then he’ll never see what he does wrong,” Sariatu argued. “And if he doesn’t see what he did wrong, he will never change and the spell will never be broken.”

Before Coraline could argue against the kitsune, Adelina entered the room. “She’s here!” Eggs cried.

“Oh there you are,” said Sariatu, warmly. “Glad to see you out and about.”

“Heeeyyy,” Coraline drawled out nervously. “I’m Coraline—”

“And I’m Eggs!” the boxtroll cut her off. “And we’re—”

This time, he was cut off by Susan running in. “Guys, she’s gone! The girl’s gone!” cried the yeti. “I swear my eyes never left the... oh, hello miss.” He shook her hand.

“And this is Susan,” Coraline said in a dull tone.

“If there’s anything we can do- stop that!” She tried to swat Susan’s hand away as he still kept shaking Adelina’s hand. “To make your stay more- I said *stop it* !” She managed to pull his arm away so that she could finish, “Comfortable...”

“I am a little hungry,” admitted Adelina. Chief barked in agreement.

“Except that,” Coraline added quickly.

“Coraline!” Sariatu exclaimed scoldingly.

“You heard what *he* said!”

“Well I’m not going to let the poor girl go hungry!”

Coraline groaned. “Fine! I’ll get a glass of water, crust of bread and then—”

“What is this, a prison?” Susan joked. “Come on, Coraline. She’s a guest, and guests must be made to feel welcome here.” He looked to Adelina. “Right this way, miss!”

“Oh no, you don’t!” cried Coraline as she chased after them. “If the master finds out you violated his orders and fed her—”

“He won’t find out about it,” Susan interrupted, then continued leading Adelina to the dining table.

“Coraline,” Eggs said as he approached her. “Didn’t you see her stand up to him? I am telling you, this girl is the one. They must fall in love if we are to be human again, and they can’t fall in love if she stays in her room and starves.”

“You know with that attitude of hers, they’ll never...” Coraline trailed off, lips curving down as she realized he was right. If they didn’t fall in love then everyone would be stuck in these cursed forms, unhappy for the rest of their lives.

“A broken clock is only right once a day, not twice,” Eggs replied, moving past her to help with preparing the meal. “And this isn’t one of those times.”

He went to the counter, grabbing a champagne glass and shaking it. “Perfect! Time to sparkle!” He went over to Bobinsky who was preparing the stove, climbing up the mammoth and sipping a spoonful from a bubbling pot. “Ooh! This is, how Winnie would say, exquisite!”

“Off!” Bobinsky exclaimed, trying to shake the young boxtroll off. “Off me while I work! Pepper must get cracking, salt must shake leg—”

“Not so loud!” Coraline hissed at the wooly mammoth. “Keep it down or *he’ll* hear you!”

“Of course, of course...” Eggs nodded, but had a mischievous smile. “But what is dinner without small talk?”

“Small talk?” Coraline repeated, tilting her head. “What are you— *woah!*” Before she could finish, she was dragged off by Eggs to the dining room.

“Gracious miss, it is with great pleasure that we welcome you here tonight. Now, we invite you to relax. Let us pull up a chair as the dining room proudly presents... *your dinner.*”

Quickly, Susan wrapped a napkin around Adelina’s neck to which she couldn’t help but feel flattered. This was the first time she felt as though she wasn’t a prisoner trapped in some strange tower, but instead as though she was their guest. Still, she untied the napkin and placed it on her lap. She smiled sheepishly at the yeti, who didn’t seem to mind all that much.

Suddenly, she felt her mouth water a bit as a few dishes were passed down with the most delicious-looking meals.

“Soup du jour and hot hors d’oeuvres. Thought you might like ‘em,” Susan told her. “Try the grey stuff, it’s *delicious!*”

Adelina dipped her finger in a plate of hot hor d’oeuvres, tasting the grey treat. “Mmm, this is good!”

“Of course,” said Susan happily. “The dinner here’s never second best.”

Adelina went on to unfold a menu nearby, take a glance and see all of the food lined up. More plates of food and dishes came by as she read the menu, this time being brought by Eggs. “Would you like beef ragout, cheese souffle or better yet: pie and pudding *en flambe!*” At

this, he brought out a small torch and set it to the pudding and it exploded, covering his and Susan's faces with soot. "...oops, sorry!"

Adelina giggled. "It's okay." She grabbed some napkins, handing them over to the two. "Here."

"Thank you," both mumbled, wiping their faces clean with the napkins.

"Anyway," Eggs continued, finally having wiped off the soot. "We shall prepare and serve with flair a culinary cabaret to you! You've been so alone and scared but no more. Tonight, you eat!"

Then in came more staff members bringing in glasses of champagne, pies, fish and all other kinds of food, even a piece of steak for Chief. As they brought in the food, some performed tricks while others told fun little stories. The funniest bit of the whole performance, in Adelina's opinion, had to be when Susan pulled Coraline aside and began a monologue of sorts...

"Life is so unnerving for a companion who is not serving..."

He got on the table, tying together napkins and wrapping himself in them for more effect. "Ah, those good old days when we were useful... suddenly, those good old days are gone. For so long, we've been rusting, needing so much more than dusting — needing exercise, a chance to use our skills!"

A bunch of salt sprinkled on Coraline's head as a snow-like effect, to which she rolled her eyes.

"Most days, we just laid around the mansion... flabby, fat and lazy 'til you walked in and oopsy-daisy!"

Adelina clapped at the monologue, until Sariatu came in with a tray of soup. "Hope you saved some room for some whale soup," said the kitsune.

"Of course." Adelina brought the bowl to her lips and took a sip. "It's delicious. Thank you." She bowed her head at the kitsune, then looked to the rest of the staff. "All of you. You've shown me such hospitality, I cannot begin to express how grateful I am."

"Of course, you are our guest," Susan said. "Anything you want, you get."

"I just cannot believe it. All my life, I've read stories about cryptids and just creatures one couldn't find through a regular lookout," Adelina began gushing. "I've always wanted to discover a cryptid, to go on such an adventure and now... now, I'm in an enchanted mansion surrounded by them! I wish..." She rubbed her arm, looking down in sorrow as she remembered taking her father's place. "I only wish it could have been under different circumstances."

Susan patted her shoulder. "I'm sorry about your father."

"It's alright. It was either him or me and in the end, I made my choice and I cannot go back on it now..." Adelina sighed, then changed the subject, "Anyway, I'm curious: how *did* this place become enchanted?"

"Enchanted?" Coraline nervously laughed. "Who said anything about this place being enchanted? That's dumb..." She glared at Eggs. "You told her, didn't you?"

"I kinda figured that a bunch of cryptids in the same place has something magic-related to it," Adelina corrected the girl's assumption. "Perhaps a curse of sorts?"

"You would be correct on that," Sariatu confirmed with a nod. "A curse *did* happen involving the master, but that was years ago."

"Years? But you all are so... young," Adelina spoke, confused. "You look as if you haven't aged in who knows how long."

"Time stopped when the curse was cast," Eggs explained, then gestured between him and Coraline. "So we've both been children for years, and *her* family hasn't gotten older."

Coraline shot another glare at Eggs. "*Don't.*"

"Speaking of family, where are some of your parents?" Adelina brought up. "I know she's with her son—" she gestured to Sariatu "—but what about you two? Don't you have any family?"

"The other boxtrolls are my family!" Eggs answered proudly. "My father's Jelly and Fish and Shoe are like my... uncles, I think. Adoptive uncles, at least."

"And what about your family?" Adelina asked Coraline.

Coraline shifted, then admitted in a shameful voice: "I ran away from my parents." She flinched upon seeing the surprised look on Adelina's face, knowing she was judging her, but she went on regardless, "I thought they were too busy with their own work to care about me since they would never go to the garden with me, they wouldn't take me out or even just spend enough time with me so one night, I left. I left and then I stumbled across the *Sir Lionel Frost*, and he offered me a place as one of his travelling companions so I went with him." She looked down, regret not only in her tone but written across her face as well. "And now, here I am."

She expected a scolding from the woman but instead, much to her surprise, she was brought into a hug. "Oh that's *terrible*! I am so sorry," Adelina sympathized as she patted the young one's back. "You thought you were not loved so you acted impulsively just like any other child, only to end up being a cursed companion of that Sir."

"It's not completely terrible," Coraline tried to lighten the topic. "I mean, he's not *that* bad... he's got a heart deep down somewhere, I swear. I just — I just miss them sometimes and wish I hadn't run off without a word."

"I just cannot believe all of you ended up cursed like this," Adelina said as she pulled away from the hug, looking from the girl to all of the cursed ones around her. "From nice, innocent folks to children... this can't be permanent, it *can't*. There *has* to be a way to break this curse."

They all looked at each other, knowing the answer to her question. There *was* a way to break the curse, *but* it involved her and she couldn't know of this. She could not know of her involvement in fear that the chances of the curse being broken would be botched with her knowledge preventing her from forming a genuine relationship with Lionel.

So Sariatu only told her, "There is but it's up to *him* to find out."

"Hey, would you like a tour of this place?" Susan asked Adelina, suddenly changing the subject. "I could show you around 'cause I know every inch of this place!"

Upon hearing that, Adelina had an idea: not only would she get to see more of the mansion and explore every inch of it, but maybe there was a clue somewhere in the place on how to lift the curse. If she discovered this clue, then everyone would be free and able to go out and leave this place. She might have had to stay here forever, but the others didn't deserve to. They deserved freedom in their true forms, and she would grant that to them somehow.

"Sure," she replied. "That sounds good."

Susan clapped his hands together. "Great! Follow me!"

Susan lead the group through the hallways, with everyone else trudging behind him. Adelina eyed everything from the ceilings to all the portraits on the walls to the artifacts and the floor, trying to find something peculiar. She had to admit, though, it was all very fascinating.

"And here we have the earliest painting of the thunder bird." Susan pointed to a painting showing a large black bird flying high in the air, carrying a small human in its talons.

Adelina looked at it carefully. "Where did you get this?"

Susan shook his head. "Oh no, I didn't get it. Lionel did," he corrected her.

"I see," Adelina murmured. Such a large collection the werewolf had... perhaps he was a cryptozoology buff like her? Then she shook her head. She had to focus.

As they continued the tour, she saw a staircase leading up. She noticed one of the paths seemed more... darker, compared to the other. She strayed from the group, deciding to check it out.

Coraline looked behind at the back and saw what Adelina was doing. She lightly pulled Eggs' arm and gestured back, and the boxtroll saw the woman make her way to the staircase. "Guys!" Eggs whisper-yelled, making the others turn to him. He and Coraline pointed back, and they all ran up to her, moving in front of her and blocking her path.

"What's up there?" Adelina asked, looking up to the west side of the castle.

"Where?" Susan glanced to where she was looking. "Up there? Nothing! There's no thing in the West Wing that would interest you. It's very dusty, dull — not a place you would find excitement in."

"Oh, so *that's* the West Wing," Adelina said, intrigued, now knowing where she wanted to go.

Everyone winced. "Nice going," grumbled Coraline, elbowing Susan.

"I wonder what he's hiding up there," Adelina wondered aloud.

"H-hiding?" Eggs stammered. "Sir Lionel is hiding nothing!"

"If he wasn't hiding anything, then the West Wing wouldn't be forbidden to explore in," Adelina replied, not falling for the lie. She attempted to get past them, but they refused to let her go by.

"There's many things for you to see in the other corridors," Sariatu insisted. "Why focus your attention on this one?"

"I want to explore the West Wing, though," Adelina said, looking at the dimly-lit side of the castle.

"Listen, Adelina," the kitsune took on a more firm tone. "That is a place where the master has declared he wants no one else to go. There are plenty of other places here to keep yourself entertained and occupied, and that is not one of them."

"You oughta try something else, like the garden," Susan suggested. "Or maybe the library—"

Adelina thought for a moment. "Library, you say? Do you happen to have any books on hidden creatures?"

The yeti nodded quickly. "Oh yes, definitely!"

"Tons of books!" Eggs added.

"A forest of them!" Coraline cried.

"Cascades of them," Sariatu pitched in. "Why don't we go and check out some of them right now?"

The four of them began talking about the library and all of the books there as they headed to it, ignoring Adelina who was left alone at the staircase. Letting his curiosity overtake him, the young woman ventured up the staircase and off to the West Wing.

Going down the hall, Lionel came to the door of Adelina's room with a tray of food for her. "Act like a gentleman, Lionel," he whispered to himself. "Act like a gentleman... this will be good." He knocked on the door. "Oh, Adelina?"

There wasn't a response. Figuring she was staying silent due to still being miffed, he knocked again. "Adelina?"

Still no answer.

He put his ear to the door, trying to listen for any breathing or murmurs, or even some sounds from that dog she had... but there was only silence. She didn't respond because she wasn't there.

She left her room.

The tray slipped from Lionel's hands as it hit him right then and there where she could have possibly gone: the West Wing. He immediately dashed off, leaving behind the shattered remains of the plates and bits of food he had personally cooked for her.

Whatever excitement Adelina began to dwindle as she walked through the hallways leading to the forbidden room. In the hallway, there was a broken mirror. Each shard mirrored her concerned expression.

When she reached the massive door to the room, she noticed its handle was modeled after the head of a dragon. She shuddered as she opened the door and stepped inside.

So much furniture laid in rubble, curtains were shredded — evidence of the werewolf's temper, no doubt. There was so much of the rubble laying around that she nearly stumbled over a table, but quickly caught it before it fell. She turned her head and saw a shredded picture hanging on the wall. He lifted the picture's shreds, only to see that it was a picture of a man.

The man appeared to have short slicked and styled hair as black as the night's sky, with a sharp aquiline nose and pale skin that was almost as white as snow with rosy tints to his cheeks and the tip of his nose. He was tall and lanky with long arms and legs, wearing a suit of sorts, though the colors there seemed a little more faded. What caught Adelina's attention the most though were the man's bright blue eyes. They were so engaging, enthusiasm shining bright in them with such kindness. He looked like such a gentleman, almost the complete opposite of Sir Lionel Frost.

However, Adelina didn't stare at the portrait any longer to notice how familiar the man's blue eyes were to Lionel's, for she had turned away and noticed a bell jar that a glow coming from it. She walked over to the table, her eyes transfixed on the rose within the jar. The petals looked so soft and although the flower was drooping slightly, it was still in full bloom. *A clue, no doubt.*

She reached out, carefully lifting the jar off. For a moment, she stared at the bare rose as it floated above the small table.

As she reached out to touch it, a shadow fell over her. "I would not touch that if I were you," a low chilling voice growled.

She looked ahead, gasping as she saw Lionel on the balcony.

He jumped back into the room, slamming the jar back over the rose. His attention then turned to Adelina, eyes burning with rage as he advanced on her. “Do you mind telling me what were you doing here?”

“I...I was looking around,” Adelina answered, taking a step back. “I’m sorry.”

“I thought I specifically told you never to come here,” Lionel hissed, his voice raising.

“I know, but I meant no—” she tried to defend herself, but he wouldn't let her finish.

“Do you realize what you could have done?!” he shouted. “You have broken my trust and nearly damaged my rose! *Get out!*”

“No,” Adelina said firmly, standing her ground and trying to appear as brave as she had when she previously stood before him. “I meant no harm and was only looking around. I wasn’t even trying to damage the flower and even then, I didn’t even know—”

“You had *no* right to be here! *No right!*” the werewolf interrupted her with his shouting again, this time knocking over some furniture as he advanced more upon her.

This startled Adelina and immediately, she regretted not following the group. She stumbled back, placing her hands on the table she nearly fell over to keep herself steady. “Please, calm down!”

“*GET OUT!*” Lionel bellowed again.

Now frightened, Adelina quickly tried to run past Lionel, only for him to grab her by the arm. She yelped and pulled against him, only to fall backwards as he pulled her sleeve off.

“*You- oh... oh no,*” he murmured, his blue eyes widening as he realized what he was doing. He had been shouting and yelling at her, and now *pulled off her sleeve* and *made her fall*. Seeing her using her arms to push herself up slightly, he saw fear in those big green eyes of hers along with some tears. “Oh no, *no*, Adelina—”

He reached an arm out to help her get back up, but she slapped it away. “Don’t you *dare* touch me!” she yelled, angry tears threatening to spill from her eyes. How could he do this to her? Out of everything he had done, *this* was a new low, a strike that hurt her beyond belief. Her pride was struck and she felt so humiliated, so *stupid* for thinking that even for a *night* things could go well. How naive and foolish of her. She shouldn’t have come here at all.

“No, I—” Lionel tried to explain himself, tried to tell her that he did not mean to do it and that his anger had gotten the better of him but she would not let him finish.

“If you want me to get out so badly, then *fine!*” she screamed at him, trying to keep the tears from leaking. “I will get out of here, away from *you!*”

Adelina ran out of the room, leaving Lionel alone to fall into despair, overwhelmed by remorse and self-recrimination. He ruined his chances with her. He damned himself by letting

his anger get the better of him, by acting like a *monster*.

"I'm sorry," he whispered, looking at the entrance she fled through. "I'm sorry, Adelina. I did not mean to frighten you. I did not mean to *hurt*... you don't understand. There's so little of me, so little left..."

Back downstairs, everyone had been looking for Adelina.

"How could she have snuck off like that?" ranted Sariatu. "One of you was supposed to keep an eye on her!"

"We thought she was following us!" Eggs said defensively.

Adelina suddenly appeared racing down the stairs. She brought her fingers to her lips, letting out a sharp whistle. Chief perked up and immediately took after his mistress.

"Wh-where are you going?" Susan asked, confused as Adelina ran past him and the others towards the front doors.

"Promise or no promise, I have clearly outstayed my welcome here!" Adelina shouted back, grabbing a jacket from the coat rack and putting it on.

"Oh no, wait! Please wait!" the yeti tried to plead with her, but it was too late, for she had already opened the door and slammed it shut behind her.

Each of them tried to say something, only for no words to come out. They all bowed their heads in sadness. All in one night, everyone had lost their only hope.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Two chapters in one night? Yep, I just like spoiling my readers (aka some of my friends ft. guests).

Adelina, blinded by her tears, couldn't see where she was going. Currently, she could hardly even care. She was too hurt, too angry, too busy frantically trying to wipe away her tears to care. She kept thinking about what had just happened only minutes ago, what had just happened to her.

He had shouted at her. Of course she had snuck in, but he didn't have to shout *that* loudly... and — and even then, he didn't have to be as harsh as he was. He didn't have to advance like that, didn't have to practically yank on her arm and pull off her sleeve and make her fall when she tried to leave. He could have tried to be reasonable and level-headed for once, but no, he wasn't. He hurt her. He hurt her so badly that she didn't care about the promise she made anymore. She wasn't going to stay there any longer for a second, not when given proof that she clearly wasn't welcome there.

She was going back home to Papá. She was going back to the village, to the life that she knew lately with Papá at the cottage far off from there. She was going home.

Snow flew around Adelina in the wind as she ran through the forest. Strands of hair whipped around through the breeze. She clutched the coat tighter around her chest, trying to keep herself from freezing. Chief was at her heels, barking and sniffing at the ground, trying to find a way back home.

Suddenly, Adelina heard a growl, one that she recognized almost instantly. From the corner of her eye, she saw a pack of wolves following her and Chief, snow flying off their bodies as they chased them.

The two forged on quickly, darting from side to side, causing some of the ocelots to hit the trees as they gave chase.

Adelina ignored the churning feeling in her stomach as she and her dog reached a frozen lake. Had it been any other day, she would have turned around but right now, the risk of being eaten alive by wild cats was too high to take so she did not steer away from the lake.

There wasn't any hesitation from either her or Chief as they ran across the ice, across the pond. The sound of ice cracking underneath their feet was deep and low, and increasing. Their feet slid on the ice. The wolves were closing in.

They made it across the pond onto land, but before Adelina could feel any relief —

As they came to a clearing, they were surrounded by the wolves. Chief growled, crouched down and then pounced at some of them, sinking his teeth in and clawing at them. Seeing that now was the time to fight lest she should become their next meal, Adelina grabbed a large tree branch from a snow-covered tree nearby, shook the snow off of it and held it in front of her.

The wolves charged. She dodged each of their snapping jaws and their sharp claws, hitting some across the face. Chief was growling viciously and running around, fighting off wolves left and right. One tried to catch him off guard and dig its teeth into him, only for Adelina to bash its head with the branch.

She turned to confront another, but it bit the branch clean out of her hands. Now she had nothing to defend herself with, leaving her vulnerable as another ocelot leapt at him, grabbing at the end of her cloak and dragging her to the ground.

The woman looked up, her eyes widening in horror as she saw that one of the wolves was about to jump on top of her. Hearing a loud howl, she braced herself for the incoming pain and her end —

Only for it to never come as the wolf was soon caught mid-air by none other than Lionel. The werewolf roared a thunderous roar in the wolf's face before he hurled it across the frozen pond, howling.

Adelina's eyes widened as she saw who had saved her. Lionel got down on all fours, snarling at the remaining wolves. "Don't you *dare* touch her!"

The wild cats and the beast lunged at one another. All the wolves dove on the werewolf at once, tearing shreds from his clothes. He struck back at them. Some wolves scurried and some yelped.

The wolf that had tried to attack before pounced and sunk its teeth into Lionel's shoulder, causing the others to attack that area as well. He thrashed around, knocking some of the ocelots back while a few continued to attack. Adelina could only watch in fear as the werewolf fought off the pack.

Lionel slammed some wolves against the snowy floor, while kicking others back. However, when the main wolf came near, he seized it. They snarled at one another and Lionel roared, then hurled the main wolf against a tree and a loud cracking noise echoed through the forest. Seeing their fellow wolf knocked out, the remaining pack scurried away in panic, yelping with their tails tucked between their legs.

Lionel turned back to Adelina, breathing in and out heavily. He looked at her despairingly, making sure she was alright before he collapsed onto the ground out of exhaustion.

This was her chance. Adelina could run. She looks past Chief, to the woods — to freedom — but then turned back, her conscience nagging at her. She looked at her fallen savior, knowing all too well that he wouldn't be able to get back to the castle all by himself.

Cautiously, she went over to him and turned him over to see if there were any wounds. There were three big scratches on his arm that had torn through his sleeve and soaked it red, bleeding out slowly. Her hand shook as she placed it on his forehead. It felt too hot. Chief let out a whimper, seeing the body lying in the snow.

She couldn't leave him to die. He risked his life to save hers, after all. An average beast with lack of remorse or care for others wouldn't even think of doing such a deed, especially for someone who crossed them... yet he still saved her.

That proved he wasn't a monster who only cared for himself. It proved that he *did* care for others, even her.

Adelina covered Lionel with her blanket. He stirred, one eye opening. "You have to help me," she whispered to him. "You have to stand up."

Lionel shakily got up. Adelina leaned against him, trying to support his body by putting his arms over her shoulders. "Lead the way back, Chief," she said to her dog. He barked affirmatively and led the two back to the castle.

Lionel's legs wobbled on the way back and there were times where he nearly fell, but Adelina would always stop him from falling. She stood close to his side, keeping him steady throughout the walk.

In the den, Susan stood by, holding a bucket of hot water. Adelina dipped a rag into the bucket, turning back to Lionel, who was licking the blood off his wounds.

"Ay, no," she said softly. "Don't lick your wounds. It's not going to help." She tried to clean his wounds with the rag but he refused, merely glaring at her. "Por favor...hold still."

She touched the rag to the wound, causing Lionel to roar in pain. The staff members who had been watching — Sariatu, Eggs, Coraline and Kubo — jumped back into hiding as they heard his outburst.

"*That hurts!*" Lionel shouted into Adelina's face.

But this time, Adelina wouldn't back down so easily. "Well if you held still for just a second, then it wouldn't hurt as much!" she shot back.

"Well, if you hadn't run away, this whole mess could've been avoided!" he replied, smirking a little as he thought he had won the argument.

"If you hadn't frightened me, I wouldn't have run away in the first place!" she pointed out.

He opened his mouth to respond, only to stop as he tried to think of a good comeback. "Well, *you* shouldn't have wandered off into the West Wing!"

"Well, *you* should learn to control your temper!" Adelina retorted, causing Lionel to raise his hand to bring out another point, only for him to realize that he had none.

Slowly, the others began to emerge from their hiding as Adelina had won the argument. She moved the rag closer to the wound once more. “Now, hold still. It will sting for a while, but you’ll get better eventually.”

Lionel grunted in surprise. Soon, he gritted his teeth and squeezed his eyes shut as the rag was applied, but listened as the woman continued to speak tenderly, “By the way, thank you for saving my life back there. If it wasn’t for you, I would have been dead.”

He opened his eyes, surprised. “You’re welcome,” he replied just as tenderly, giving her a soft smile. It was genuine.

The two were silent for a moment as they stared into each other’s eyes. Then finally, Adelina broke the silence, “You should...probably get some rest. It’ll help your injuries heal.”

Lionel nodded silently, and they headed off to his room.

As they made their way to her room, Adelina wondered what had happened to Lionel prior to this whole mess. Surely, his current temper, attitude and overall state had to have stemmed from *something*... but what?

She snapped out of her thoughts as she heard him open the door to her room. She looked at him, watching as he stepped into the room.

“Thank you, Adelina, for helping me,” he said kindly, surprising her. She could’ve sworn that as he was closing the door, she heard him mutter, “Even if I do not deserve it...”

As she turned back, she saw the others standing by. “I hope I don’t sound rude, but...why is he like this?” she asked quietly. “Has he always acted—?”

“No, he wasn’t always like this,” Susan interrupted. He looked at the others, as if he were seeking approval to continue speaking. Once they nodded, he continued, “You see, a long time ago, he was once this great man — an *explorer*.” He smiled a little, noticing Adelina’s surprised look as he uttered the last words. “But then, somewhere down along the way, the people’s remarks started getting to him and he assumed he *had* to prove them all wrong, show that he was worthy of being a part of their greater society... that’s where it all went downhill.”

She mulled over the story for a few minutes, then recalled the picture she saw back in the West Wing. That man...was he Lionel? She couldn't help but wonder. It would make sense yet it seemed too hard to fathom.

He used to be a simple explorer, but then the people’s degradation of him turned him into what he is today. Maybe, what he needed was a friend. The only way the curse could be broken is if he did something, but he would need some help, no doubt.

“Do you know a hint at any way to break this spell?” Adelina asked. “Surely, there has to be a clue.”

Susan bit his lip, knowing all too well that telling her how to lift the curse would only make her feel pressured to fall in love with Lionel. The love had to be genuine, from the *heart*.
“I’m not sure,” he lied.

Adelina looked back at Lionel’s door. She had to find a way to help break the curse for all of them, especially Lionel. After all, he saved her life, so it only seemed fair that she return the favor.

The only problem was *how*?

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

More chapters? Take it as an apology for not updating within two months.

Not too distant from all the houses in town was an industrial wasteland. Amidst the wasteland was a lone building with a bloody red top hat painted on the huge wooden door. This building was a factory run by none other than Archibald Snatcher, leader of the Redhats — an opposing team to the Whitehats, run by the mayor, Lord Portley-Rind.

There in the factory, Snatcher and his three men — Mr. Pickles, Mr. Trout and Mr. Gristle — gathered to discuss their plans. Mostly, these plans consisted of Snatcher trying to become a Whitehat so he could taste the delicious cheese that they had, especially the mayor's, but there were discussions of the pest control they did, in which of course the main reason behind it was Snatcher trying to get a white hat. There were also times where the Redhat leader would taste some cheese brought in, much to the protest of Pickles and Trout who knew of his allergy and how much swelling it cause, hence why they kept a barrel of leeches just in case.

Rarely did Archibald Snatcher ever get visitors. While he was not exactly in the “odd” section of the town's hierarchy, he was barely above the average villager. The Whitehats certainly did not respect him, nor did the optimates either. Both saw him as an inferior man of lower class, while the villagers merely saw him as the man who took care of the nightly pests every week. The most respect he got was a tiny shred which, granted, was better than nothing, but still... his status in society was definitely not something he wanted to remain permanent.

Tonight, however, was very different. Tonight, he had a visitor — a very special guest known as Lord Piggot-Dunceby, leader of the optimates. It was quite a shock when he had opened the door and saw the lord and his assistant Collick standing there but nevertheless, he let them in.

“Usually,” Snatcher began as he sat down at the table, across from Dunceby and Collick. “I don't get many visitors, so a visit from your lordship is such a pleasant surprise.”

“And I usually don't leave my mansion in the middle of the night,” Dunceby said, eyeing the Redhats who stood off to the side in observation. His eyes went back to Archibald. “But in regards to this little issue I have, I know you are worth my while.” He brought out a bag of cheese and tossed it over to the Redhat leader.

Snatcher immediately grabbed the bag and opened it, pulling out a piece. He sniffed it, taking in the aroma. “Aaah, sweet old cheddar...” He looked back at Dunceby. “Alright, your

lordship, I'm listening."

"It's simple: I want to be the greatest man in town, and my only chance at getting to that point is through the odd girl: Adelina," Duncceby explained. "But she's very stubborn, so in order to get her to agree, she needs a little... *persuasion*."

"She literally threw him out of his house," Collick added, causing his boss to shoot a glare at him.

"Everyone knows that Félix is very lacking when it comes to sanity," Duncceby continued, looking back at Snatcher. "Back at the tavern, he was raving about a werewolf in a mansion."

"So he has delusions? Typical behavior of an old man," replied the Redhat leader in a blunt manner. "That itself does not warrant any of my help, unless of course he *has* a beast with him... or it involves one of those brie stuffed pigs—"

"Let me get to the point, Snatcher!" snapped the lord. Snatcher's expression dropped into a scowl, but he let the lord go on, "The point is that Adelina would move heaven and earth for her father."

"Yes." Collick nodded at this. "She'd even become his *maid*!"

Snatcher tapped his fingers against the table's surface, thinking over the plan presented to him. "So you want me to lock Mr. Félix up, unless his oddball of a daughter agrees to work for you... oh, that's *despicable*..." Then, he let out an evil laugh: "I love it! Only one thing, there is a catch: my payment."

Lord Piggot-Duncceby scowled. "*Payment*? What do you want, my money?"

Snatcher gave him an oily smile. "Oh no, I don't want money," he said, then made a grabbing gesture with his hands at Mr. Pickles and Trout, who quickly gave him his papermade white hat. He held it the paper crafted hat up. "I want one of these."

"A white hat? You?" Duncceby cackled. "Only when bigfoot is proven to be real!"

Snatcher stood up from the table, turning to head up the stairs to higher parts of the factory. "Alright then, you'll just have to do this plan all by yourself. Have fun trying to get at the top of the social pyramid all on your own."

Duncceby's resolve disappeared. "Oh *fine*!" he reluctantly agreed. "Once I reach the top, I will make *sure* that Lord Portley-Rind will be so far below me, that he'll *have* to make you a white hat."

Snatcher stopped halfway up the stairs, his back still turned to Duncceby. "For a white hat?" He turned back toward the lord with a maniacal grin. "I will have that old man locked up in a cage!"

Back at the cottage, Félix was packing up. The other dogs all watched as he threw his things into a bag and put on a coat. "If none of these idiotas will help me, then I'll go back alone!"

Rex, Duke, King and Boss all looked between each other. The old man must be talking about his daughter, they guessed, since that was all he ever talked about now since she and their fellow dog, Chief, had disappeared hours ago prior to the old man showing back up.

"I don't care what it takes," he said stubbornly, heading out the door with his bag slung on his back. "I'll find that mansion and somehow I'll get her out of there."

The old man left for his journey, going off in the woods and leaving the house all to the dogs. Only a while after did Duncceby, his lackeys and the Redhats arrive, looking for the residents.

At first, the four dogs growled as the intruders broke in, only to stop once Stenk brought out his gun, followed by Gristle holding a net in hand.

"Adelina! Félix!" Duncceby called as he looked around the house.

"My lord, they don't seem to be here," said Collick, glancing around. "Mr. Stenk?"

"Aw, *shoot*," said the bounty hunter, finding that the drawers were wide open. "Boss, you're not gonna like this, but I think they left."

"What?! No, they couldn't have left, they—" he stopped, seeing the drawers open wide, the coat rack rummaged, missing a coat from a hanger.

"Wait, didn't they have *five* dogs?" asked Mr. Pickles, tilting his head as he looked over the current four.

"Err, yes, I believe so," said Mr. Trout, nodding.

Even more proof that they had left. It all dawned on Duncceby that the key to his success at surpassing the mayor and being the greatest man in the village along with the bait to getting that key were gone. As it hit the old man, he fell to his knees and began throwing a tantrum.

A very loud, incomprehensible tantrum. His lackeys stared, Snatcher watched unimpressed and the Redhats shrugged.

"I guess our work here is...done?" Pickles said, unsure.

"I guess so," Trout agreed, also uncertain.

"GONE!" Gristle exclaimed.

"No! I won't stand for it," Duncceby hissed as he got back up. "They'll have to come back *sometime* ." He grabbed Stenk by the collar and walked outside to a bush with him. "And as soon they do, we'll be waiting for them. Stenk!" He dropped him into the snowy bush. "Don't move from that spot until Adelina and her father come home."

He then stormed off with Collick, Snatcher and the Redhats following him. "All things considered, I think he took that quite well," his assistant said to Pickles and Trout, who quietly agreed.

“But, I—” Stenk tried to protest, but was left alone. “ *Shoot !*” He pounded the house and a pile of snow fell on his head, making the dogs bark with laughter.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

happy super early valentine's everyone! hope you all had a wonderful holiday season.
here's a new chapter to start the new decade off.

A month after the incident in the woods — along with Adelina's discovery of the castle and its inhabitants being cursed — the young woman found herself in the garden, walking along with Chief. As it was now winter, she was now wearing a white coat with a hood that had fur on it. Chief, meanwhile, wore a plaid dog-sweater.

The birds that hadn't flown south for the winter were fluttering and chirping all around. One yellow parakeet even landed on Adelina's finger, allowing her to pet it. Chief raced through snow banks, barking happily as he bound towards his owner, sending them both tumbling down into the snow. Adelina laughed and patted her dog's head.

High up in the mansion, Lionel was watching from the balcony along with Susan, Coraline and Eggs. "I... I don't know what this feeling is," he admitted, his eyes focused on Adelina. He watched her eyes sparkle with delight as she went about throwing small snowballs at Chief. Hearing her laugh so angelically made his heart beat faster than it normally did. He looked at his bandaged arm, remembering what she had done for him. "But I know that I haven't felt this way about anyone else except her." He got an idea. "I want to do something for her, to thank her for all that she's done for me." Then, he paused as a discouraged look crossed his features. "But what?"

"Well," Coraline started, "Well, there's the usual thing: flowers, chocolates, promises you don't intend to keep..."

"No, no." Eggs shook his head. "This is no ordinary girl we're talking about here. It has to be something special."

"Something that sparks her interest, maybe," Susan added, then remembered. "Aahhh!" He quickly whispered something into Lionel's ear.

The werewolf drew back, skeptical. "Are you sure that is also her interest?" Receiving a nod in return, he murmured, "*Well...*"

Adelina came back inside, wearing a green dress. Eggs quickly cleared his throat and bowed in Adelina's direction, as did Coraline. Susan and Lionel looked in her direction.

"Say something about the dress," the yeti muttered under his breath to the werewolf.

“It’s green,” said Lionel, confused.

“I meant a compliment!” Susan clarified. “Yeesh, and *I’m* supposed to be the one who’s very literal.”

“Oh, right.” Lionel rubbed the back of his neck, embarrassed. He had never really courted anyone before, but now, here he was. “What a nice dress you have there,” he said to Adelina.

She beamed at him. “Gracias!”

He looked at Susan, Eggs and Coraline as if he were asking *how did I do?* They nodded and made *go on* motions. He turned back to Adelina. “Adelina, I have something I want to show you.”

“Really?” she asked, surprised.

“Yes. Follow me.” He led her upstairs through a hallway upstage, towards a room. He began to open the door, but then stopped. “But first, you have to close your eyes.” He noticed the questioning look on her face and added, “It is a surprise.”

Adelina raised an eyebrow at first, but closed her eyes anyway, wondering what type of surprise he had planned for her.

Lionel waved a furry paw in front of her face, making sure her eyes were completely shut. Then, he opened the door and lead her inside. Just as she entered the room, Adelina asked, “Puedo abrir mis ojos ahora?”

“No, not yet,” Lionel whispered. “Wait here.” He walked away to draw back the curtains. As he did so, bright sunlight poured into the room.

Adelina flinched a little as the light hit her face, but she still kept her eyes shut. “Now can I open my eyes?”

“Yes,” Lionel replied, grinning. “You may open them now.”

Adelina finally opened her eyes. She gasped in surprise as she saw that she was inside a study filled with many artifacts of cryptids and mythical creatures. There were sculptures of creatures such as the Fiji Mermaid, drawings of bigfoot, a tooth from the Loch Ness monster and much more. All around her was proof and little pieces of hidden creatures and civilizations, just within one small room.

“Oh, Lionel,” she breathed. “I — I can’t believe it. I’ve never seen such a grand collection in all my life, especially not so much proof and bits of such grand hidden creatures before! How did you get all of these?”

“I have my ways,” he said coolly. Then, he asked nervously, “Do you — do you like it?”

“It’s *wonderful!*” she answered, turning to him.

“Then everything here is yours,” he stated. “From top to bottom, all that is within this room is your property as it is mine, for this is your home.”

Adelina smiled at Lionel and wrapped her arms around him, hugging him. “Muchas gracias,” she whispered.

Lionel’s eyes widened for a moment, before he returned the hug. “You’re welcome,” he returned, stroking her back gently. “It’s what friends are for, right?”

She grinned and hugged him tighter. “Right.”

Just by the door, Susan, Coraline, Eggs, Herbert, Sariatu and Kubo had gathered to observe the two. Needless to say, they were very pleased with the progression the werewolf had made in his relations with the woman.

“Well, would you look at that?” Susan sighed happily. “Isn’t it beautiful?”

“It seems like only yesterday, they were at each other’s throats,” Eggs remarked.

Herbert nodded at his son. “Now, they’re so friendly around each other.”

“What do you mean by that?” Kubo asked as the adults and even his two fellow kids began to chuckle quietly at Herbert’s comment.

“It’s very encouraging,” Sariatu said with a small smile on her face.

“This is so exciting!” said Coraline, grinning and clasping her hands together.

“Okay, you guys are being weird,” Kubo commented, still confused by the others’ behavior. “He just gave her a gift, and then they hugged. I don’t see the need to fuss over that.”

Sariatu looked at her son for a moment, realizing that a twelve year-old had a much different view of romance than a teenager or an adult and thus would not pick up on certain things as quickly. Not to mention, he hadn’t even been given the talk yet and barely had an idea of romance. “How about we get back to the kitchen?” she suggested, pushing him forward with her muzzle. “There’s some chores that need to be done.”

“But—” Kubo tried to protest, only for his mother to drag him away. He sighed, thinking to himself, *people, especially grownups, can be weird sometimes...*

In the dining room, breakfast was being served. As Adelina began to eat her porridge, she looked across the table, only to see Lionel gobbling up his food like a wild animal. The werewolf stopped once he saw the woman was staring at him, wiping his muzzle clean, feeling embarrassed to have been so un-gentlemanly in front of a lady.

Kubo giggled, only for Sariatu to shoot a glare at him afterwards. Susan laughed sheepishly and then decided to hand a fork over to Lionel, who took it nervously.

Adelina watched in wonder as Lionel tried to eat with the fork, with little success as he slurped and lapped at the porridge more messily than a puppy with wet kibble. Finally, after seeing his failed attempt, she put her spoon down and lifted her bowl as if she were making a toast.

Lionel noticed her attempt to compromise and did the same. Soon, the two were sipping their breakfast out of their bowls.

Later on, they went to the courtyard and were currently feeding the birds as Adelina began to think about the current state of their relationship. Weeks had been passing by and they were getting closer and closer by each day. It didn't take long for her to realize that he really had changed. No longer was the werewolf rude and unfriendly. Now, he was sweet and even kind. She now knew he wasn't like that. He was barely even recognizable as the same werewolf who was so snappy and had kept her as a prisoner. Instead, he was someone whom she was glad to call her *friend* for the great goodness she found within him.

There's something sweet,

And almost kind

But he was mean,

And he was coarse and unrefined

But now he's dear and so unsure,

I wonder why I didn't see it there before.

Lionel tried to attract the birds by shoving a handful of seed at them, only for them to fly away in fear. Noticing this, Adelina took a handful and gently spread it out, creating a trail that led to Lionel's hands. A yellow bird landed in Lionel's paw. He looked up at Adelina, thrilled while she beamed at him.

In his mind, as he sung, he couldn't help but be surprised by how joyful she was, how she wasn't angry with him anymore and that they were now friends. Seeing her smile gave him hope that this friendship could turn into something more.

She glanced this way,

I thought I saw

And when we touched,

She didn't shudder at my paw

He then looked down, quickly dismissing his own thoughts. He couldn't get his hopes up too high, just in case he was wrong. He had to give it time, just so that if he *was* proven wrong, the blow would be softened.

No, it can't be.

I'll just ignore,

But then she's never looked at me that way before.

Adelina quickly stood up, went over and ducked around a tree, leaving Lionel alone with the birds. She felt doubtful, just as new feelings began to surface within her. She had barely found a way to break the curse, and yet, she found himself growing attached to Lionel in a way she never thought she would. She placed her hand on her chest as a feeling of warmth washed over her. She began to breathe in and out, while her cheeks flushed a dark brown.

New, and a bit alarming

Who'd have ever thought that this could be?

She turned her head around the tree, only to burst out laughing as she saw that he was surrounded by birds.

True that he's no Prince Charming

But there's something in him that I simply didn't see!

After the birds flew away, Lionel looked back at Adelina proudly, only to be hit with a snowball. He shook the snow off his muzzle and saw she was giggling, prompting him to smirk and gather a large pile of snow. Seeing this, she gasped and quickly threw another snowball at him, causing him to drop his huge pile of snow on his head. He laughed and got up to chase her around a tree, but she ducked around the other side and snuck up on him from behind.

From high up near a window, the whole gang watched as the snowball toss ensued, resulting in the two laughing and tumbling around together.

Well, who'd have thought?

Well, bless my soul.

And who'd have known?

Well, who indeed?

And who'd have guessed they'd come together on their own?

It's so peculiar

The group then left the room just as Adelina and Lionel came back into the castle, to the den.

Susan stopped for a moment and quickly peered into the den, noticing that Adelina was reading aloud a book called *The Pig Woman's Groom* while Lionel was curled up around her, listening in. The yeti looked back at the others, grinning.

And who'd have guessed they'd come together on their own?

Herbert eagerly clasped his hands together as if he were a hopeless romantic watching a romance film.

It's so peculiar!

They all then began to walk away, leaving the two lovebirds alone.

We'll wait and see

A few days more

There may be something there was wasn't there before

"I don't get it though," Kubo spoke up, looking at his mother curiously. "What's there, mother?"

Sariatu shook her head, before she kissed his head and patted it. "I'll tell you when you're older."

Kubo was silent for a moment, before he then asked, "Mother, will I ever be a real boy again?"

"Yes," his mother answered slowly, looking at the others, who were now silent with looks of sympathy on their faces. "If it is to be, then it'll happen very soon."

The twelve year-old smiled a little, nodding. "Good."

And with that, they all soon cleared out of the hallway, knowing one thing was for certain: things were beginning to look better now.

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